EXHIBIT AA

The New Hork Times

D.N.C. Says Russian Hackers Penetrated Its Files, Including Dossier on Donald Trump

By David E. Sanger and Nick Corasaniti

June 14, 2016

WASHINGTON — Two groups of Russian hackers, working for competing government intelligence agencies, penetrated computer systems of the Democratic National Committee and gained access to emails, chats and a trove of opposition research against Donald J. Trump, according to the party and a cybersecurity firm.

One group placed espionage software on the committee's computer servers last summer, giving it unimpeded access to communications for about a year. The committee called in CrowdStrike, a cybersecurity firm, early last month after the Democratic Party began to suspect an intrusion.

A senior government official said Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign, based in Brooklyn, also appeared to have been targeted, but it was not clear whether it lost any data. The breach at the Democratic committee was first reported on Tuesday by The Washington Post.

The committee's systems appeared to have had standard cyberprotections, which are no challenge for determined state-sponsored hacking groups. The attackers were expelled last weekend with CrowdStrike's help, the committee said. It did not provide a detailed account of what had been copied from the systems, and it may never know.

The connection to Russia may be explained simply by the global fascination with the presidential campaign and the mystery surrounding Mr. Trump, who has not been a major subject of foreign intelligence collection. But it also recalls a subplot to the race: Paul Manafort, Mr. Trump's campaign chairman, previously advised pro-Russian politicians in Ukraine and other parts of Eastern Europe, including former President Viktor F. Yanukovych of Ukraine.

Opposition research itself is not all that valuable to a foreign government, but it can point to a candidate's vulnerabilities. To a foreign government fascinated by an American election, any intelligence a campaign develops on an opponent could be exploited.

Dmitri Alperovitch, a co-founder of CrowdStrike, said he believed that the group that first hacked the committee's servers — a group his firm had named Cozy Bear long before the breach — appeared to be the same that downloaded communications in recent years from unclassified email systems used by the State Department and the White House.

In 2014 and 2015, the effort to clean the State Department systems after those intrusions resulted in several shutdowns, some in the midst of delicate negotiations with Iran. The administration has never confirmed that the Russian government was behind those intrusions,

but it has briefed officials on the details in classified sessions.

"These are incredibly sophisticated groups," Mr. Alperovitch said. "They covered their tracks well. It wasn't until the second group came in," stealing the opposition research on Mr. Trump, "that their presence was detected."

The second group, named Fancy Bear, which appeared to have attacked in April, is believed to be operated by the G.R.U., the military intelligence service. Its past targets have included military and aerospace organizations from the United States, Europe, Canada, Japan and South Korea.

CrowdStrike concluded that neither Russian group knew the other was attacking the same organization. "One would steal a password, and the next day the other group would steal the same password," Mr. Alperovitch said.

Mrs. Clinton said on Telemundo that she had learned of the breach only after news outlets reported it. She called it "troubling," but said she was unsure about the hackers' goals.

"Now, why?" she asked. "We don't know yet. So far as we know, my campaign has not been hacked into, and we're obviously looking hard at that. But cybersecurity will be an issue that I will be absolutely focused on as president. Because whether it's Russia, or China, Iran or North Korea, more and more countries are using hacking to steal our information, to use it to their advantage, and we can't let that go on."

The Office of Personnel Management, whose files on about 22 million Americans with security clearances or applications for them were breached by Chinese hackers, is still trying to assess the damage first detected last year.

The Democratic committee avoided any discussion of its vulnerabilities.

"The security of our system is critical to our operation and to the confidence of the campaigns and state parties we work with," said Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz of Florida, the Democratic national chairwoman. "When we discovered the intrusion, we treated this like the serious incident it is and reached out to CrowdStrike immediately. Our team moved as quickly as possible to kick out the intruders and secure our network."

The party did not say how it came to suspect the intrusion.

Cyberattacks by foreign governments are a constant threat to political campaigns. Because campaign operations are temporary, they often do not invest heavily in the kind of security that financial institutions, large companies and government agencies spend millions or billions of dollars on each year.

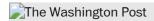
And because campaigns are so far-flung, with volunteers connecting through laptops and cellphones, they are particularly vulnerable. In 2008, hackers traced to the Chinese government infiltrated the campaigns of both Barack Obama and John McCain.

"It should come as no surprise to anyone that political parties are high-profile targets for foreign intelligence gathering," Representative Jim Langevin, a Rhode Island Democrat who has been deeply involved in cyberissues, said in a statement. "Nonetheless, it is disconcerting that two independent operations were able to penetrate the D.N.C., one of which was able to stay embedded for nearly a year."

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A version of this article appears in print on June 15, 2016, on Page A17 of the New York edition with the headline: Russian Hackers Penetrated D.N.C. Files, Including Trump Dossier, Party Says

EXHIBIT BB



Politics

Trump campaign emails show aide's repeated efforts to set up Russia meetings

By Tom Hamburger, Carol D. Leonnig and Rosalind S. Helderman August 14, 2017

Three days after Donald Trump named his campaign foreign policy team in March 2016, the youngest of the new advisers sent an email to seven campaign officials with the subject line: "Meeting with Russian Leadership - Including Putin."

The adviser, George Papadopoulos, offered to set up "a meeting between us and the Russian leadership to discuss US-Russia ties under President Trump," telling them his Russian contacts welcomed the opportunity, according to internal campaign emails read to The Washington Post.

The proposal sent a ripple of concern through campaign headquarters in Trump Tower. Campaign cochairman Sam Clovis wrote that he thought NATO allies should be consulted before any plans were made. Another Trump adviser, retired Navy Rear Adm. Charles Kubic, cited legal concerns, including a possible violation of U.S. sanctions against Russia and of the Logan Act, which prohibits U.S. citizens from unauthorized negotiation with foreign governments.

But Papadopoulos, a campaign volunteer with scant foreign policy experience, persisted. Between March and September, the self-described energy consultant sent at least a half-dozen requests for Trump, as he turned from primary candidate to party nominee, or for members of his team to meet with Russian officials. Among those to express concern about the effort was then-campaign chairman Paul Manafort, who rejected in May 2016 a proposal from Papadopoulos for Trump to do so.

The exchanges are among more than 20,000 pages of documents the Trump campaign turned over to congressional committees this month after review by White House and defense lawyers. The selection of Papadopoulos's emails were read to The Post by a person with access to them. Two other people with access to the emails confirmed the general tone of the exchanges and some specific passages within them.

Papadopoulos emerges from the sample of emails as a new and puzzling figure in the examination of the Trump campaign's contacts with Russian officials and their proxies during the 2016 election, now the subject of a special-counsel investigation.

Less than a decade out of college, Papadopoulos appeared to hold little sway within the campaign, and it is unclear whether he was acting as an intermediary for the Russian government, although he told campaign officials he was.

While the emails illustrate his eagerness to strengthen the campaign's connections to the Russian government, Papadopoulos does not spell out in them why it would be in Trump's interest to do so. His entreaties appear to have generated more concern than excitement within the campaign, which at the time was looking to seal the Republican nomination and take on a heavily favored Hillary Clinton in the general election.

But the internal resistance to Papadopoulos's requests is at odds with other overtures Trump allies were making toward Russia at the time, mostly at a more senior level of the campaign.

Three months after Papadopoulos raised the possibility of a meeting between Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin, the president's son Donald Trump Jr. and son-in-law Jared Kushner met with a delegation led by a Russian lawyer offering to provide damaging information on Clinton.

Manafort attended that Trump Tower session in June 2016, a meeting now under scrutiny in the special counsel's collusion inquiry. But the new emails reveal that Manafort had rejected a request from Papadopoulos just the previous month to set up a meeting between Trump and Russian officials.

In July 2016 and again two months later, Jeff Sessions, then a senator and senior foreign policy adviser to Trump, met with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak.

And also in July, a few weeks after Papadopoulos asked his superiors whether other campaign advisers or aides could accept some of the Russians' invitations, Carter Page, another foreign policy adviser, spoke at a Russian university in Moscow. Page said he made the trip independently of the campaign.

To experts in Russian intelligence gathering, the Papadopoulos chain offers further evidence that Russians were looking for entry points and playing upon connections with lower-level aides to penetrate the 2016 campaign.

Former CIA director John Brennan in May told the House Intelligence Committee that he had seen worrisome evidence of "contacts and interactions" between Russian officials and the Trump campaign, although he offered no specifics.

Steven L. Hall, who retired from the CIA in 2015 after 30 years of managing the agency's Russia operations, said when told by The Post about the emails: "The bottom line is that there's no doubt in my mind that the Russian government was casting a wide net when they were looking at the American election. I think they were doing very basic intelligence work: Who's out there? Who's willing to play ball? And how can we use them?"

Papadopoulos, a former intern and researcher at the conservative Hudson Institute, was on a list of campaign volunteers that Trump announced as his foreign policy advisory team during a meeting with The Post's editorial board in March 2016. Trump called Papadopoulos an "excellent guy."

Almost immediately, Papadopoulos came under scrutiny for his lack of experience. He graduated from college in 2009, and his LinkedIn profile cited his participation in a Model U.N. program for students among his qualifications. Papadopoulos did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

Page, who has been the subject of a foreign surveillance warrant over his connections to Russia, said the Papadopoulos email exchange was another sign that the Russia communications were inconsequential.

"The entirely benign offer from a volunteer member of the Trump movement is infinitely less relevant than the real collusion in the 2016 election," said Page, who was copied on the first Papadopoulos email communication in March. Page said in an email exchange Saturday that "the real scandal lies among Clinton and Obama associates who fed false evidence" to investigators that he said formed the basis of the federal warrant concerning him.

Papadopoulos made more than a half-dozen overtures on behalf of Russians or people with Russia contacts whom he claimed to know.

On March 24, Clovis, the campaign co-chairman who also served on the foreign policy team, reacted to one proposed Russia meeting by writing, "We thought we probably should not go forward with any meeting with the Russians until we have had occasion to sit with our NATO allies."

In the same email chain, Kubic, the retired admiral, reminded others about legal restrictions on meetings with certain Russian officials, adding, "Just want to make sure that no one on the team outruns their headlights and embarrasses the campaign."

Undeterred, Papadopoulos alerted then-campaign manager Corey Lewandowski in an April email that he was receiving "a lot of calls over the past month" about arranging a Russia meeting.

"Putin wants to host the Trump team when the time is right," he wrote on April 27.

On May 4, Papadopoulos forwarded Lewandowski and others a note he received from the program head for the government-funded Russian International Affairs Council. In it, Ivan Timofeev, a senior official in the organization, reached out to report that Russian foreign ministry officials were open to a Trump visit to Moscow and requested that the campaign and Russians write a formal letter outlining the meeting.

Clovis responded to the Timofeev invitation by noting: "There are legal issues we need to mitigate, meeting with foreign officials as a private citizen."

The email chain does not show a response from Lewandowski, who did not return calls seeking comment.

Several weeks later, Papadopoulos forwarded the same message from Timofeev to Manafort, the newly named campaign chairman.

"Russia has been eager to meet with Mr. Trump for some time and have been reaching out to me to discuss," the adviser told Manafort.

Manafort reacted coolly, forwarding the email to his associate Rick Gates, with a note: "We need someone to communicate that DT is not doing these trips."

Gates agreed and told Manafort he would ask the campaign's correspondence coordinator to handle it — "the person responding to all mail of non-importance" — to signify this did not need a senior official to respond.

A spokesman for Manafort, whose Virginia home was raided by FBI agents three weeks ago as part of an investigation by special counsel Robert S. Mueller III, said the email chain provides "concrete evidence that the Russia collusion narrative is fake news."

"Mr. Manafort's swift action reflects the attitude of the campaign — any invitation by Russia, directly or indirectly, would be rejected outright," Manafort spokesman Jason Maloni said in a statement.

In an email to The Post, Timofeev confirmed that his organization had discussed a meeting with the Trump campaign in the spring of 2016.

The Russian International Affairs Council was created in 2010 by a decree of then-President Dmitry Medvedev as a project of various Russian government agencies. It is led by former foreign minister Igor Ivanov. Its board includes Russia's current foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, as well as top Russian scholars and business leaders, among them the chairman of Alfa-Bank and Sberbank, two of Russia's largest banks.

"We discussed the idea informally as one of the opportunities for ... dialogue between Russia and the U.S.," Timofeev said in the email. "RIAC often hosts meetings with prominent political figures and experts from the US and many other countries."

He said the group would have been open to meeting with other campaigns.

Clinton spokesman Nick Merrill said officials with the Democrat's campaign have "no recollections or record" of having been contacted by the group. Similarly an adviser to Barack Obama's first presidential campaign, former Russian ambassador Michael McFaul, said he could not recall any similar invitation.

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- Opinion
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- Science
- Health
- **Sports** Sports
- Arts
- Arts **Books**
- Fashion & Style
- Fashion & Style
- Food
- <u>Food</u>
- **Travel**
- Magazine
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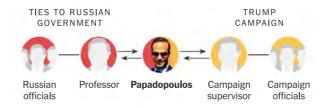
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Politics

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How a Trump Adviser Repeatedly Sought a Meeting With Russia

By TROY GRIGGS, K.K. REBECCA LAI and JASMINE C. LEE OCT. 30, 2017

Court documents <u>released on Monday</u> show how an adviser to Donald J. Trump's presidential campaign, **George Papadopoulos**, repeatedly <u>sought to set up a meeting</u> between the Russian government and Mr. Trump and his campaign officials.

Mr. Papadopoulos contacted the campaign at least 11 times from March to June 2016 about a potential meeting. Campaign officials discussed or replied to his messages at least three times, and they encouraged Mr. Papadopoulos and another adviser to make the trip to meet Russian officials, which never took place.

Meets a Professor With Russian Ties



On March 14, 2016, Mr. Papadopoulos, while traveling in Italy, met **a professor** who claimed to have substantial connections with Russian government officials. At the time, Mr. Papadopoulos was set to become a foreign policy adviser for the Trump campaign.

On March 24, Mr. Papadopoulos met again with the professor, who brought a **Russian woman** he introduced as having ties to the Russian government.

Seeks a Meeting Between Russian Officials and Trump Campaign



After the meeting with the professor, Mr. Papadopoulos emailed the Trump campaign supervisor and members of the campaign's foreign policy team about arranging a meeting between campaign and Russian officials to discuss how United States-Russia relations would be if Mr. Trump were elected.

In response, the campaign supervisor said that he would "work it through the campaign," but that no commitment should be made at that point, adding, "Great work."

On March 31, at a national security meeting in Washington, D.C., with **Mr. Trump** present, Mr. Papadopoulos said that he had connections that could help arrange a meeting between Mr. Trump and President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia.

Mr. Papadopoulos continued to correspond with the professor and the Russian woman to arrange a meeting, while informing the campaign of his progress.

Speaks With Another Russian Connection



On April 18, the professor introduced Mr. Papadopoulos via email to a Russian who said he had connections to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Over the next several weeks, Mr. Papadopoulos and the Russian had multiple conversations trying to set up a meeting between Russian officials and the Trump campaign.

On April 25, Mr. Papadopoulos emailed a **senior campaign adviser** and said there was "an open invitation by Putin for Mr. Trump to meet when he is ready."

Learns About 'Dirt' on Clinton



On April 26, in another meeting with the **professor**, Mr. Papadopoulos is told that the **Russians** had obtained "dirt" on Hillary Clinton, involving thousands of emails.

Told to Pursue a Meeting



After the conversation with the professor, in at least eight emails to campaign officials, Mr. Papadopoulos reiterated **Russia's interest** in meeting with Mr. Trump.

In June, Mr. Papadopoulos asked a high-ranking campaign official about the trip again, stating that "I am willing to make the trip off the record if it's in the interest of Mr. Trump and the campaign to meet specific people."

In August, the **campaign supervisor** encouraged Mr. Papadopoulos and another adviser to "make the trip, if it is feasible." The trip did not take place.

Pleads Guilty to Lying to the F.B.I.

On January 27, 2017, Mr. Papadopoulos was questioned by F.B.I. agents about his conversations with people with ties to the Russian government. He has since pleaded guilty to <u>lying to the F.B.I.</u> during that interview.

Note: Dates of time line are approximate and based on court documents.

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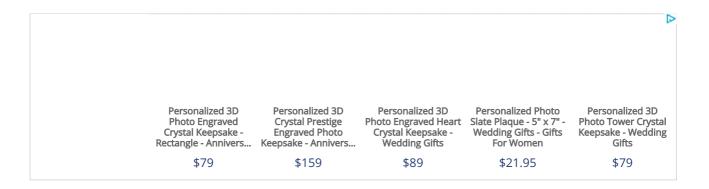
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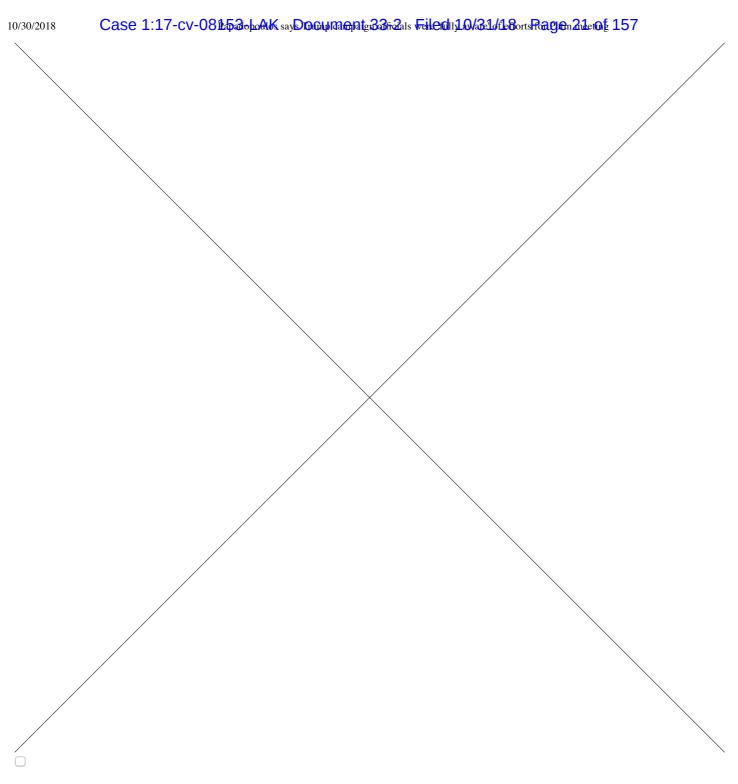


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Papadopoulos says Trump campaign officials were 'fully aware' of efforts for Putin meeting

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Russia Investigation

Papadopoulos says Trump campaign officials were 'fully aware' of efforts for Putin meeting

"I actively sought to leverage my contacts with the professor to host this meeting. The campaign was fully aware of what I was doing," he said.



Former Trump campaign aide George Papadopoulos with his wife Simona Mangiante leaves after his sentencing hearing at U.S. District Court in Washington, on Sept. 7, 2018. Yuri Gripas / Reuters

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Sep. 9, 2018 / 11:35 AM EDT By Daniella Silva

George Papadopoulos, a one-time Trump campaign adviser who was <u>sentenced on Friday to 14 days in jail as part of special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation</u>, said Sunday that Attorney General Jeff Sessions was "quite enthusiastic" about his potentially setting up a meeting between Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin. He added that members of the campaign were "fully aware" of his efforts.

Papadopoulos' remarks directly contradicts what Sessions told Congress under oath, that he "pushed back" on the potential meeting.

"My recollection differs from Jeff Sessions'," Papadopoulos said on ABC's "This Week" Sunday morning.

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MUELLER INVESTIGATIONPapadopoulos sentenced to 14 days in jail for lying to FBI in Mueller probe

Papadopoulos was then asked if he believes Mueller's investigation will show there was collusion between Trump's presidential campaign and the Russians.

"All I can say is that my testimony might have helped move something towards that, but I have no idea," he said.

Papadopoulos said he brought up the idea of setting up a meeting between Trump and Putin at a campaign meeting on March 31, 2016, and that there were mixed reactions.



Former Trump adviser Papadopoulos admits to lying to FBI

Sep. 1, 201800:55



"Candidate Trump at the time, he nodded at me, I don't think he was committed either way. He was open to the idea and he deferred of course to then senior Sen. Jeff Sessions, who I remember being quite enthusiastic about hosting," Papadopoulos said Sunday.

He added that after the March meeting, others in the campaign were aware of his efforts pursuing a Trump-Putin meeting, including then-campaign manager Corey Lewandowski and senior aide Sam Clovis.

"I actively sought to leverage my contacts with the professor to host this meeting," Papadopoulos said, referring to a professor who is believed to be a Russian government operative. "The campaign was fully aware of what I was doing."

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RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION Onetime Trump advisor Papadopoulos pleads for sentencing leniency

He said Clovis had told him "excellent work" while he was discussing with the group that he was talking with Maltese Professor Joseph Mifsud, who could potentially organize a meeting with Putin.

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Papadopoulos was sentenced on Friday to the jail time and one year of supervised release for lying to the FBI about his interactions with Mifsud.

Mifsud told Papadopoulos that the Russians possessed incriminating information about Hillary Clinton in the form of "thousands of emails" — before it was widely and publicly known that Russia had stolen Democratic emails, according to Papadopoulos and prosecutors.

He later related talk of the emails to an Australian diplomat during what The New York Times described as a night of heavy drinking at an upscale London bar in

That diplomat, Alexander Downer, passed the information to the FBI, launching the federal government's investigation into Russian election interference.

Papadopoulos repeated Sunday that he was "remorseful" for his actions. He said he does not remember telling Downer, but that he does remember telling a different top diplomat. He also said he does not remember telling anyone in the campaign about the emails.

Papadopoulos pleaded guilty last October to making a false statement to the FBI when they interviewed him in January 2017.

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EXHIBIT EE

The New York Times

Trump Team Met With Lawyer Linked to Kremlin During Campaign

By Jo Becker, Matt Apuzzo and Adam Goldman

July 8, 2017

Update: The Times is now reporting that Donald Trump Jr. was promised damaging information about Hillary Clinton before the meeting. Read the story.

Two weeks after Donald J. Trump clinched the Republican presidential nomination last year, his eldest son arranged a meeting at Trump Tower in Manhattan with a Russian lawyer who has connections to the Kremlin, according to confidential government records described to The New York Times.

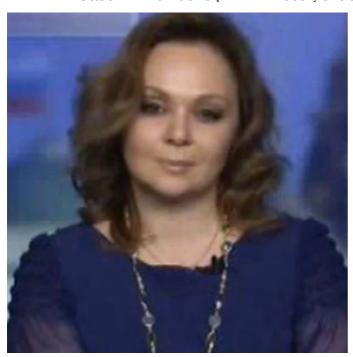
The previously unreported meeting was also attended by Mr. Trump's campaign chairman at the time, Paul J. Manafort, as well as the president's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, according to interviews and the documents, which were outlined by people familiar with them.

While President Trump has been dogged by revelations of undisclosed meetings between his associates and Russians, this episode at Trump Tower on June 9, 2016, is the first confirmed private meeting between a Russian national and members of Mr. Trump's inner circle during the campaign. It is also the first time that his son Donald Trump Jr. is known to have been involved in such a meeting.

Representatives of Donald Trump Jr. and Mr. Kushner confirmed the meeting after The Times approached them with information about it. In a statement, Donald Jr. described the meeting as primarily about an adoption program. The statement did not address whether the presidential campaign was discussed.

American intelligence agencies have concluded that Russian hackers and propagandists worked to tip the election toward Mr. Trump, and a special prosecutor and congressional committees are now investigating whether his campaign associates colluded with Russians. Mr. Trump has disputed that, but the investigation has cast a shadow over his administration for months.

Natalia Veselnitskaya



Mr. Trump has also equivocated on whether the Russians were solely responsible for the hacking. But in Germany on Friday, meeting President Vladimir V. Putin for the first time as president, Mr. Trump questioned him about the hacking. The Russian leader denied meddling in the election.

The Russian lawyer invited to the Trump Tower meeting, Natalia Veselnitskaya, is best known for mounting a multipronged attack against the Magnitsky Act, an American law that blacklists suspected Russian human rights abusers. The law so enraged Mr. Putin that he retaliated by halting American adoptions of Russian children.

The adoption impasse is a frequently used talking point for opponents of the Magnitsky Act. Ms. Veselnitskaya's campaign against the law has also included attempts to discredit its namesake, Sergei L. Magnitsky, a lawyer and auditor who died in mysterious circumstances in a Russian prison in 2009 after exposing one of the biggest corruption scandals during Mr. Putin's rule.

Ms. Veselnitskaya was formerly married to a former deputy transportation minister of the Moscow region, and her clients include state-owned businesses and a senior government official's son, whose company was under investigation in the United States at the time of the meeting. Her activities and associations had previously drawn the attention of the F.B.I., according to a former senior law enforcement official.

In his statement, Donald Trump Jr. said: "It was a short introductory meeting. I asked Jared and Paul to stop by. We primarily discussed a program about the adoption of Russian children that was active and popular with American families years ago and was since ended by the Russian government, but it was not a campaign issue at the time and there was no follow up."

He added: "I was asked to attend the meeting by an acquaintance, but was not told the name of the person I would be meeting with beforehand."

Late Saturday, Mark Corallo, a spokesman for the president's lawyer, issued a statement implying that the meeting was a setup. Ms. Veselnitskaya and the translator who accompanied her to the meeting "misrepresented who they were," it said.



Paul Manafort at the Republican National Convention last year in Cleveland. Eric Thayer for The New York Times

In an interview, Mr. Corallo explained that Ms. Veselnitskaya, in her anti-Magnitsky campaign, employs a private investigator whose firm, Fusion GPS, produced an intelligence dossier that contained unproven allegations against the president. In a statement, the firm said, "Fusion GPS learned about this meeting from news reports and had no prior knowledge of it. Any claim that Fusion GPS arranged or facilitated this meeting in any way is false."

Donald Trump Jr. had denied participating in any campaign-related meetings with Russian nationals when he was interviewed by The Times in March. "Did I meet with people that were Russian? I'm sure, I'm sure I did," he said. "But none that were set up. None that I can think of at the moment. And certainly none that I was representing the campaign in any way, shape or form."

Asked at that time whether he had ever discussed government policies related to Russia, the younger Mr. Trump replied, "A hundred percent no."

The Trump Tower meeting was not disclosed to government officials until recently, when Mr. Kushner, who is also a senior White House aide, filed a revised version of a form required to obtain a security clearance. The Times reported in April that he had failed to disclose any foreign contacts, including meetings with the Russian ambassador to the United States and the

head of a Russian state bank. Failure to report such contacts can result in a loss of access to classified information and even, if information is knowingly falsified or concealed, in imprisonment.

Mr. Kushner's advisers said at the time that the omissions were an error, and that he had immediately notified the F.B.I. that he would be revising the filing. They also said he had met with the Russians in his official transition capacity as a main point of contact for foreign officials.

In a statement on Saturday, Mr. Kushner's lawyer, Jamie Gorelick, said: "He has since submitted this information, including that during the campaign and transition, he had over 100 calls or meetings with representatives of more than 20 countries, most of which were during transition. Mr. Kushner has submitted additional updates and included, out of an abundance of caution, this meeting with a Russian person, which he briefly attended at the request of his brother-in-law Donald Trump Jr. As Mr. Kushner has consistently stated, he is eager to cooperate and share what he knows."

Mr. Kushner's lawyers addressed questions about his disclosure but deferred to Donald Trump Jr. on questions about the meeting itself.

Mr. Manafort, the former campaign chairman, also recently disclosed the meeting, and Donald Trump Jr.'s role in organizing it, to congressional investigators who had questions about his foreign contacts, according to people familiar with the events.

A spokesman for Mr. Manafort declined to comment. In response to questions, Ms. Veselnitskaya said the meeting lasted about 30 minutes and focused on the Magnitsky Act and the adoption issue.

"Nothing at all was discussed about the presidential campaign," she said, adding, "I have never acted on behalf of the Russian government and have never discussed any of these matters with any representative of the Russian government."

Because Donald Trump Jr. does not serve in the administration and does not have a security clearance, he was not required to disclose his foreign contacts. Federal and congressional investigators have not publicly asked for any records that would require his disclosure of Russian contacts. It is not clear whether the Justice Department was aware of the meeting before Mr. Kushner disclosed it recently. Neither Mr. Kushner nor Mr. Manafort was required to disclose the content of the meeting in their government filings.

During the campaign, Donald Trump Jr. served as a close adviser to his father, frequently appearing at campaign events. Since the president took office, the younger Mr. Trump and his brother, who have worked for the Trump Organization for most of their adult lives, assumed day-to-day control of their father's real estate empire.

A quick internet search reveals Ms. Veselnitskaya as a formidable operator with a history of pushing the Kremlin's agenda. Most notable is her campaign against the Magnitsky Act, which provoked a Cold War-style, tit-for-tat row with the Kremlin when President Barack Obama

signed it into law in 2012.

Under the law, some 44 Russian citizens have been put on a list that allows the United States to seize their American assets and deny them visas. The United States asserts that many of them are connected to fraud exposed by Mr. Magnitsky, who after being jailed for more than a year was found dead in his cell. A Russian human rights panel found that he had been assaulted. To critics of Mr. Putin, Mr. Magnitsky, in death, became a symbol of corruption and brutality in the Russian state.

An infuriated Mr. Putin has called the law an "outrageous act," and, in addition to banning American adoptions, compiled what became known as an "anti-Magnitsky" blacklist of United States citizens.

Among those blacklisted was Preet Bharara, then the United States attorney in Manhattan, who led high-profile convictions of Russian arms and drug dealers. Mr. Bharara was abruptly fired in March, after previously being asked to stay on by Mr. Trump.

One of Ms. Veselnitskaya's clients is Denis Katsyv, the Russian owner of a Cyprus-based investment company called Prevezon Holdings. He is the son of Petr Katsyv, the vice president of the state-owned Russian Railways and a former deputy governor of the Moscow region. In a civil forfeiture case prosecuted by Mr. Bharara's office, the Justice Department alleged that Prevezon had helped launder money tied to a \$230 million corruption scheme exposed by Mr. Magnitsky by parking it in New York real estate and bank accounts. As a result, the government froze \$14 million of its assets. Prevezon recently settled the case for \$6 million without admitting wrongdoing.

Ms. Veselnitskaya and her client hired a team of political and legal operatives that has worked unsuccessfully in Washington to repeal the Magnitsky Act. They also tried but failed to keep Mr. Magnitsky's name off a new law that takes aim at human-rights abusers across the globe.

Besides the private investigator whose firm produced the Trump dossier, the lobbying team included Rinat Akhmetshin, an émigré to the United States who once served as a Soviet military officer and who has been called a Russian political gun for hire.

Ms. Veselnitskaya was also deeply involved in the making of an anti-Magnitsky film that premiered just weeks before the Trump Tower meeting. Titled "The Magnitsky Act — Behind the Scenes," the film echoes the Kremlin line that the widely accepted version of Mr. Magnitsky's life and death is wrong. The film claims that he was not assaulted and alleges that he never testified that government officials conspired to steal \$230 million in fraudulent tax rebates.

In the film's telling, the true culprit of the fraud was William F. Browder, an American-born financier who hired Mr. Magnitsky to investigate the fraud after he had three of his investment funds companies in Russia seized. On RussiaTV5, a station whose owners are known to be close to Mr. Putin, Ms. Veselnitskaya was lauded as "one of those who gave the film crew the real proofs and records of testimony."

Mr. Browder, who stopped the screening of the film in Europe by threatening libel suits, called the film a state-sponsored smear campaign.

"She's not just some private lawyer," Mr. Browder said of Ms. Veselnitskaya. "She is a tool of the Russian government."

John O. Brennan, the former C.I.A. director, testified in May that he had been concerned last year by Russian government efforts to contact and manipulate members of Mr. Trump's campaign. "Russian intelligence agencies do not hesitate at all to use private companies and Russian persons who are unaffiliated with the Russian government to support their objectives," he said.

The F.B.I. began a counterintelligence investigation last July into Russian contacts with any Trump associates. Agents focused on Mr. Manafort and a pair of advisers, Carter Page and Roger J. Stone.

Among those now under investigation is Michael T. Flynn, who was forced to resign as Mr. Trump's national security adviser after it became known that he had falsely denied speaking to the Russian ambassador about sanctions imposed by the Obama administration over the election hacking.

Congress later discovered that Mr. Flynn had been paid more than \$65,000 by companies linked to Russia, and that he had failed to disclose those payments when he renewed his security clearance and underwent an additional background check to join the White House staff.

In May, the president fired the F.B.I. director, James B. Comey, who days later provided information about a meeting with Mr. Trump at the White House. According to Mr. Comey, the president asked him to end the bureau's investigation into Mr. Flynn; Mr. Trump has repeatedly denied making such a request. Robert S. Mueller III, a former F.B.I. director, was then appointed as special counsel.

The status of Mr. Mueller's investigation is not clear, but he has assembled a veteran team of prosecutors and agents to dig into any possible collusion.

Follow Jo Becker, Matt Apuzzo and Adam Goldman on Twitter.

Sophia Kishkovsky and Eric Lipton contributed reporting. Kitty Bennett contributed research.

A version of this article appears in print on July 9, 2017, on Page A1 of the New York edition with the headline: Trump Team Met With Lawyer Tied to Kremlin Amid '16 Race

EXHIBIT FF

The New Hork Times

BREAKING

Trump's Son Met With Russian Lawyer After Being Promised Damaging Information on Clinton

By Jo Becker, Matt Apuzzo and Adam Goldman

July 9, 2017

President Trump's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., was promised damaging information about Hillary Clinton before agreeing to meet with a Kremlin-connected Russian lawyer during the 2016 campaign, according to three advisers to the White House briefed on the meeting and two others with knowledge of it.

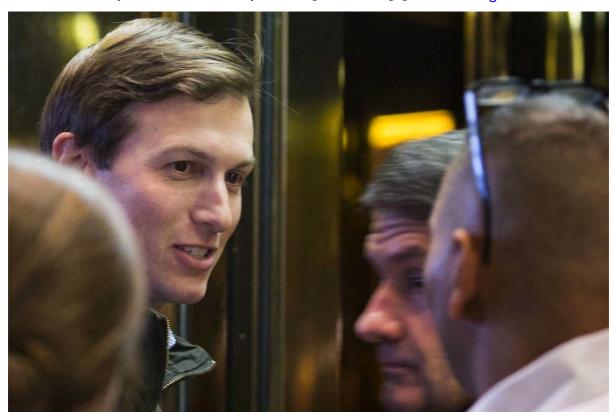
The meeting was also attended by the president's campaign chairman at the time, Paul J. Manafort, as well as by the president's son-in-law, Jared Kushner. Mr. Manafort and Mr. Kushner recently disclosed the meeting, though not its content, in confidential government documents described to The New York Times.

The Times reported the existence of the meeting on Saturday. But in subsequent interviews, the advisers and others revealed the motivation behind it.

The meeting — at Trump Tower on June 9, 2016, two weeks after Donald J. Trump clinched the Republican nomination — points to the central question in federal investigations of the Kremlin's meddling in the presidential election: whether the Trump campaign colluded with the Russians. The accounts of the meeting represent the first public indication that at least some in the campaign were willing to accept Russian help.

While President Trump has been dogged by revelations of undisclosed meetings between his associates and the Russians, the episode at Trump Tower is the first such confirmed private meeting involving his inner circle during the campaign — as well as the first one known to have included his eldest son. It came at an inflection point in the campaign, when Donald Trump Jr., who served as an adviser and a surrogate, was ascendant and Mr. Manafort was consolidating power.

It is unclear whether the Russian lawyer, Natalia Veselnitskaya, actually produced the promised compromising information about Mrs. Clinton. But the people interviewed by The Times about the meeting said the expectation was that she would do so.



President Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, also attended the meeting last year at Trump Tower. Ruth Fremson/The New York Times

When he was first asked about the meeting on Saturday, Donald Trump Jr. said that it was primarily about adoptions and mentioned nothing about Mrs. Clinton.

But on Sunday, presented with The Times's findings, he offered a new account. In a statement, he said he had met with the Russian lawyer at the request of an acquaintance from the 2013 Miss Universe pageant, which his father took to Moscow. "After pleasantries were exchanged," he said, "the woman stated that she had information that individuals connected to Russia were funding the Democratic National Committee and supporting Mrs. Clinton. Her statements were vague, ambiguous and made no sense. No details or supporting information was provided or even offered. It quickly became clear that she had no meaningful information."

He said she then turned the conversation to adoption of Russian children and the Magnitsky Act, an American law that blacklists suspected Russian human rights abusers. The 2012 law so enraged President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia that he halted American adoptions of Russian children.

"It became clear to me that this was the true agenda all along and that the claims of potentially helpful information were a pretext for the meeting," Mr. Trump said.

Two people briefed on the meeting said the intermediary was Rob Goldstone, a former British tabloid journalist and the president of a company called Oui 2 Entertainment who has worked with the Miss Universe pageant. He did not immediately respond to messages seeking comment.

Mark Corallo, a spokesman for the president's lawyer, said on Sunday that "the president was not aware of and did not attend the meeting."

> Mr. Trump's former campaign chairman, Paul J. Manafort, at the Republican National Convention in July 2016 in Cleveland. Sam Hodgson for The New York Times

Lawyers for Mr. Kushner referred to their statement a day earlier, confirming that he voluntarily disclosed the meeting but referring questions about it to Donald Trump Jr. Mr. Manafort declined to comment. In his statement, Donald Trump Jr. said he asked Mr. Manafort and Mr. Kushner to attend, but did not tell them what the meeting was about.

Political campaigns collect opposition research from many quarters but rarely from sources linked to foreign governments.

American intelligence agencies have concluded that Russian hackers and propagandists worked to tip the election toward Donald J. Trump, in part by stealing and then providing to WikiLeaks internal Democratic Party and Clinton campaign emails that were embarrassing to Mrs. Clinton. WikiLeaks began releasing the material on July 22.

A special prosecutor and congressional committees are now investigating the Trump campaign's possible collusion with the Russians. Mr. Trump has disputed that, but the investigation has cast a shadow over his administration.

Mr. Trump has also equivocated on whether the Russians were solely responsible for the hacking. On Sunday, two days after his first meeting as president with Mr. Putin, Mr. Trump said in a Twitter post: "I strongly pressed President Putin twice about Russian meddling in our election. He vehemently denied it. I've already given my opinion....."

On Sunday morning on Fox News, the White House chief of staff, Reince Priebus, described the Trump Tower meeting as a "big nothing burger."

"Talking about issues of foreign policy, issues related to our place in the world, issues important to the American people is not unusual," he said.

But Representative Adam B. Schiff of California, the leading Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, one of the panels investigating Russian election interference, said he wanted to question "everyone that was at that meeting."

"There's no reason for this Russian government advocate to be meeting with Paul Manafort or with Mr. Kushner or the president's son if it wasn't about the campaign and Russia policy," Mr. Schiff said after the initial Times report.

Ms. Veselnitskaya, the Russian lawyer invited to the Trump Tower meeting, is best known for mounting a multipronged attack against the Magnitsky Act.

The adoption impasse is a frequently used talking point for opponents of the act. Ms. Veselnitskaya's campaign against the law has also included attempts to discredit the man after whom it was named, Sergei L. Magnitsky, a lawyer and auditor who died in 2009 in mysterious circumstances in a Russian prison after exposing one of the biggest corruption scandals during Mr. Putin's rule.

Ms. Veselnitskaya's clients include state-owned businesses and a senior government official's son, whose company was under investigation in the United States at the time of the meeting. Her activities and associations had previously drawn the attention of the F.B.I., according to a former senior law enforcement official.

Ms. Veselnitskaya said in a statement on Saturday that "nothing at all about the presidential campaign" was discussed at the Trump Tower meeting. She recalled that after about 10 minutes, either Mr. Kushner or Mr. Manafort left the room.

She said she had "never acted on behalf of the Russian government" and "never discussed any of these matters with any representative of the Russian government."

The Trump Tower meeting was disclosed to government officials in recent weeks, when Mr. Kushner, who is also a senior White House aide, filed a revised version of a confidential form required to obtain a security clearance.

The Times reported in April that he had not disclosed any foreign contacts, including meetings with the Russian ambassador to the United States and the head of a Russian state bank. Failure to report such contacts can result in a loss of access to classified information and even, if information is knowingly falsified or concealed, in imprisonment.

Mr. Kushner's advisers said at the time that the omissions were an error, and that he had immediately notified the F.B.I. that he would be revising the filing.

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Since the president took office, Donald Trump Jr. and his brother Eric have assumed day-to-day control of their father's real estate empire. Because he does not serve in the administration and does not have a security clearance, Donald Trump Jr. was not required to disclose his foreign contacts. Federal and congressional investigators have not publicly asked for any records that would require his disclosure of Russian contacts.

But in an interview with The Times in March, he denied participating in any campaign-related meetings with Russian nationals. "Did I meet with people that were Russian? I'm sure, I'm sure I did," he said. "But none that were set up. None that I can think of at the moment. And certainly none that I was representing the campaign in any way."

In addition to her campaign against the Magnitsky Act, Ms. Veselnitskaya represents powerful players in Russia. Among her clients is Denis Katsyv, the Russian owner of Prevezon Holdings, an investment company based in Cyprus. He is the son of Petr Katsyv, the vice president of the state-owned Russian Railways and a former deputy governor of the Moscow region. In a civil forfeiture case in New York, the Justice Department alleged that Prevezon had helped launder money linked to the \$230 million corruption scheme exposed by Mr. Magnitsky by putting it in real estate and bank accounts. Prevezon recently settled the case for \$6 million without admitting wrongdoing.

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Among those now under investigation is Michael T. Flynn, who was forced to resign as Mr. Trump's national security adviser after it became known that he had falsely denied speaking to the Russian ambassador about sanctions imposed by the Obama administration over the election hacking.

Congress later learned that Mr. Flynn had been paid more than \$65,000 by companies linked to Russia, and that he had failed to disclose those payments when he renewed his security clearance and underwent an additional background check to join the White House staff.

In May, the president fired the F.B.I. director, James B. Comey, who days later provided information about a meeting with Mr. Trump at the White House. According to Mr. Comey, the president asked him to end the bureau's investigation into Mr. Flynn; Mr. Trump has repeatedly denied making such a request. Robert S. Mueller III, a former F.B.I. director, was then appointed as special counsel.

The status of Mr. Mueller's investigation is not clear, but he has assembled a veteran team of prosecutors and agents to dig into any possible collusion.

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Maggie Haberman, Sophia Kishkovsky and Eric Lipton contributed reporting. Kitty Bennett contributed research.

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A version of this article appears in print on July 10, 2017, on Page A1 of the New York edition with the headline: Trump Team Met Russian Offering Dirt on Clinton

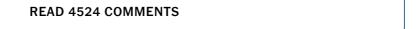


EXHIBIT GG

POLITICO

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Timothy A. Clary/AFP/Getty Images

Cohen says Trump approved Trump Tower meeting with Russians

The president's longtime attorney says he was there when Trump learned of and OK'd the gathering.

By DARREN SAMUELSOHN, QUINT FORGEY and ANDREW RESTUCCIA | 07/26/2018 09:54 PM EDT | Updated 07/27/2018 08:16 AM EDT

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Michael Cohen, President Donald Trump's longtime personal attorney, is prepared to tell special counsel Robert Mueller that then-candidate Trump knew about and approved the June 2016 Trump Tower meeting between his campaign officials and a Russian lawyer who promised dirt on Hillary Clinton, according to a source with knowledge of Cohen's account, who confirmed a <u>CNN report</u> from earlier Thursday.

Donald Trump Jr., the president's son-in-law Jared Kushner and the Trump campaign chairman at the time, Paul Manafort, attended the meeting, billed as an opportunity for a Russian lawyer, Natalia Veselnitskaya, to share damaging information about the Democratic nominee for president.

After reports of the meeting first surfaced last year, Trump Jr. claimed that only Russian adoption policy was discussed. He also testified to the Senate Judiciary Committee last September that he didn't inform his father about the meeting, according to a transcript released by the panel.

The president himself, when asked about the meeting, told reporters aboard Air Force One last July, "I only heard about it two or three days ago." That same month, Jay Sekulow, a member of Trump's legal team, said: "The president wasn't aware of the meeting, did not participate in the meeting, did not attend the meeting."

Cohen claims that he and several others were present when Trump Jr. informed his father of the planned meeting, and that Trump signed off on going ahead with it, according to the CNN report.

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Cohen's legal team declined to comment on the record. A spokesman for Mueller's office declined comment.

On Friday morning, the president denied having any knowledge of the meeting with Veselnitskaya.

"I did NOT know of the meeting with my son, Don jr. Sounds to me like someone is trying to make up stories in order to get himself out of an unrelated jam (Taxi cabs maybe?). He even retained Bill and Crooked Hillary's lawyer. Gee, I wonder if they helped him make the choice!" the president wrote on Twitter, referencing Cohen.

The source with knowledge of Cohen's account said the CNN story was an accurate portrayal of what Cohen is claiming and what he is ready to tell Mueller. The source also said Cohen had not yet spoken with the special counsel.

Cohen's claims undercut the Trump administration's "no collusion" narrative because there is going to be evidence presented to the special counsel of a conspiracy to coordinate with the Russians, the source added.

"Everyone in the room is indictable if one overt act occurred after the meeting, and anyone who knew about the meeting ahead of the time and didn't call the cops is an accessory or at least a conspirator," the source said.

Alan Futerfas, an attorney for the Trump Organization, said in a statement: "Donald Trump Jr. has been professional and responsible throughout the Mueller and congressional investigations. We are very confident of the accuracy and reliability of the information that has been provided by Mr. Trump Jr. and on his behalf."

Trump's attorney Rudy Giuliani told CNN on Thursday that Cohen lacked credibility, citing the release earlier this week of a recording Cohen secretly made of a conversation with Trump two months before the 2016 election. In the tape, the two can be heard discussing payments to a former Playboy model.

"He's been lying for years," Giuliani said. "I mean, the tapes that we have demonstrate any number of very serious lies by him back a year and a half ago, including his fooling people, hiding tape recordings, telling them they weren't recorded, lying to their face, breaking faith with them, taping his client, which is a disbarable offense. I don't see how he has any credibility."

Giuliani added: "There's nobody that I know that knows him that hasn't warned me that if his back is up against the wall, he'll lie like crazy because he's lied all his life."

MICHAEL COHEN

Clinton fixer engineers Michael Cohen's turn against Trump By DARREN SAMUELSOHN

Giuliani said the dispute about whether Trump approved of the meeting with the Russians would amount to little more than "a credibility contest" between Cohen and other top Trump campaign hands.

"It would have to be people in the room with the president that can corroborate Cohen, which there won't be because it didn't happen,' Giuliani said. "And then it becomes a credibility contest between two or three witnesses who say one thing and Cohen who says another."

Trump has loudly and repeatedly denied that his presidential campaign colluded with the Russians, calling Mueller's investigation a "witch hunt."

But the explosive report, if corroborated by Mueller's team, could potentially expose the president and his team to additional legal risk, according to experts.

"The significance of this report will depend on the facts," said Barbara McQuade, a former U.S. attorney from eastern Michigan. "If Trump was aware of the meeting in advance and encouraged it to go forward, then he could face criminal exposure under a number of different theories."

"He could be in violation of campaign finance laws for accepting a thing of value from a foreign national in relation to an election" she continued. "If he knew that the source of the information was from illegal hacking, he could be charged with accessory after the fact to a violation of the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act. He could also be charged with conspiracy to defraud the United States by impeding

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But Cohen's statement on its own probably isn't enough to convince Mueller.

"It's huge if true. The question will be if it can be corroborated," said Peter Zeidenberg, a former federal prosecutor. "It's very possible that Mueller can or will be able to corroborate much of this. I would not be at all surprised if these participants emailed or texted one another about the meeting — before and after."

"Of course, for some, even if Trump is caught on video talking Russian to Putin, they will not care," added Zeidenberg, who served as deputy to independent counsel Patrick Fitzgerald during the George W. Bush-era investigation into who leaked CIA operative Valerie Plame's identity. "For most, though, this is a big deal and would show, once again, how dangerous it is to rely on Trump's denials."

Trump claims Cohen tape on Playboy model may have been doctored By LOUIS NELSON

If accurate, the disclosure could also help Cohen with his own legal issues. Cohen's business practices relating to taxi medallions and real estate are under federal investigation. But David Weinstein, a former federal prosecutor from Miami, said the former Trump Organization official might be able to find a way out of trouble with his testimony on the Trump Tower meeting.

"If what Cohen now says is true, this would be his golden ticket out of his problems," Weinstein said. "The critical question is whether there is corroborating evidence to support his now changed testimony. If corroborated, this could become the backbone of a conspiracy to both commit the crimes Mueller is investigating and the cover-up. It will make Watergate look like a mere burglary."

It remains unclear whether the other attendees at the meeting knew that Trump approved of the conversation. If they were aware, and they lied about it, they could face additional problems.

"If true, my first question is whether Trump Jr. told Congress that Trump didn't know about the Trump Tower meeting," said Renato Mariotti, a former federal prosecutor from Chicago. "Did he lie to Congress? That is a crime if it can be proven that he knew Trump was aware of the meeting."

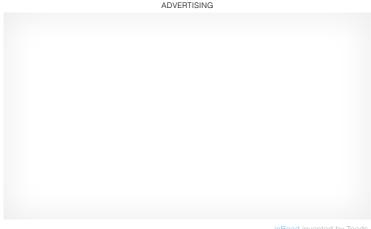
Mariotti said Trump's awareness of the Trump Tower gathering suggests that the meeting was considered significant enough to tell Trump himself and "runs counter to the spin that the meeting was considered unimportant."

"Perhaps the key question is: What did Trump think the meeting was about?" Mariotti added. "If Trump thought he was meeting to obtain aid from the Russian government, that could have serious political implications regardless of any legal liability."

Donald Trump, Jr. <u>cited</u> attorney-client privilege last year to avoid telling lawmakers about a conversation he had with his father after news broke of the Trump Tower meeting.

The revelation also underscores Cohen's decision to turn on Trump, his ex-boss, whom he served for more than a decade.

"Few people will be surprised that President Trump is again caught in a lie to the public," said William Jeffress, a white-collar defense attorney who represented former President Richard Nixon and also Vice President Dick Cheney's senior aide, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, in the Plame investigation. "But if CNN's report is accurate, it appears that Cohen has turned against Trump big-time, and that has to cause serious concern to him and his legal team."



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EXHIBIT HH

Ad ~

Secret Service: Donald Trump Jr. didn't have agency's protection at time of meeting

By Sophie Tatum

Updated 1:39 AM ET, Mon July 17, 2017

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

Trump Jr., a Russian lawyer and top members of Trump's campaign took part in the meeting

The President has maintained having no knowledge of the meeting

Washington (CNN) — The Secret Service is pushing back on President Donald Trump's attorney's remarks Sunday that there was nothing questionable going on at a meeting last summer between Trump's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., a Russian lawyer and top members of Trump's campaign.

"Well, I wonder why the Secret Service, if this was nefarious, why the Secret Service allowed these people in," Jay Sekulow said on ABC's "This Week." "The President had Secret Service protection at that point, and that raised a question with me."

After Sekulow's comments aired, the Secret Service responded that it wouldn't have checked out the participants of the meeting because Trump's eldest son wasn't in their charge.

"Donald Trump Jr. was not a protectee of the USSS in June, 2016," the agency told CNN in a statement. "Thus we would not have screened anyone he was meeting with at that time."



Trump Jr.: I 'probably' met with other Russians 02:19

The meeting, which took place in Trump Tower in New York City, involved Trump Jr., Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, then-campaign chairman Paul Manafort, Russian lawyer Natalia Veselnitskaya, publicist Rob Goldstone, Russian-American lobbyist Rinat Akhmetshin and at least two other people, sources familiar with the meeting told CNN.

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damaging information on Hillary Clinton as "part of Russia and its government's support for Mr. Trump."

The President has maintained having no knowledge of the meeting until the Times' reporting.



Sen.: Unbelievable Trumps omit Russia meetings 00:53

Sekulow reiterated Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union" that Trump did not know about the meeting, saying: "The President was not engaged in this, was not aware of it."

That assertion raised skepticism from Sen. Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the Senate intelligence committee, later in the same program.

"Frankly, it's a little bit unbelievable that neither the son or the son-in-law ever shared that information with their dad, the candidate," Warner said.

The Virginia senator went on to say he wants to question everyone involved in the meeting as part of the committee's investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election.

"Whether we'll be able to get the Russian nationals to come over and testify is an open question," Warner said. "Those people that our committee has jurisdiction over, the Americans, I sure as heck want to talk to them."

EXHIBIT II



REUTERS World Business Markets Politics TV



4 MIN READ

POLITICS JULY 16, 2017 / 11:56 AM / A YEAR AGO

Arshad Mohammed, Howard Schneider

U.S. Secret Service rejects suggestion it vetted Trump son's meeting

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The U.S. Secret Service on Sunday denied a suggestion from President Donald Trump's personal lawyer that it had vetted a meeting between the president's son and Russian nationals during the 2016 campaign. This video is currently unavailable.

Donald Trump Jr. has acknowledged that he met in New York with Russian lawyer Natalia Veselnitskaya after he was told she might have damaging information about his father's rival, Case 1:17-cv-08153-LAK Document 33-2 Filed 10/31/18 Page 50 of 157 Democrat Hillary Clinton.

"Well, I wonder why the Secret Service, if this was nefarious, why the Secret Service allowed these people in. The president had Secret Service protection at that point, and that raised a question with me," Jay Sekulow, a member of the president's legal team, said on Sunday on the ABC news program "This Week."

In an emailed response to questions about Sekulow's comments, Secret Service spokesman Mason Brayman said the younger Trump was not under Secret Service protection at the time of the meeting, which included Trump's son and two senior campaign officials.

"Donald Trump, Jr. was not a protectee of the USSS in June, 2016. Thus we would not have screened anyone he was meeting with at that time," the statement said.

According to emails released by Trump Jr. last week, he eagerly agreed to meet Veselnitskaya, who he was told was a Russian government lawyer. Veselnitskaya has said she is a private lawyer and denies having Kremlin ties.

On Friday, NBC News reported that a lobbyist who was once a Soviet counter-intelligence officer participated in the meeting, which was also attended by Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, and the president's former campaign manager, Paul Manafort.

FILE PHOTO: Donald Trump Jr. speaks at the 2016 Republican National Convention in Cleveland, Ohio U.S. July 19, 2016. REUTERS/Mario Anzuoni/File photo

The meeting appears to be the most tangible evidence of a connection between Trump's election campaign and Russia, a subject that has prompted investigations by congressional committees and a federal special counsel.

Moscow has denied any interference and the president and Trump Jr. have denied any collusion.

Sekulow's comments about the Secret Service drew quick criticism, including from Frances Townsend, who advised former Republican President George W. Bush on homeland security.

"Ok let's try to deflect blame & throw those in @SecretService who protect @POTUS @realDonaldTrump @FLOTUS & family under the bus," she said on Twitter.

The Secret Service's mission is to provide physical protection for the U.S. president. The agency also protects major presidential candidates. But its role in vetting people who meet with a U.S. president or candidates is limited to ensuring physical safety.

FILE PHOTO: Donald Trump (L) talks with h...

LAWYER: TRUMP UNAWARE OF MEETING

Trump himself has said he was unaware of the meeting between his son and the Russian lawyer until a few days ago.

Trump targets Ryan over birthright citizenship

"The president was not aware about this meeting, did not participate in this meeting," Sekulow told the CBS program

"Face the Nation."

Sekulow added that Trump was not aware of any meetings between his campaign staff and

Russians.

A federal special counsel and several congressional panels are investigating allegations by U.S. intelligence agencies that Russia meddled in the 2016 U.S. presidential election to hurt Clinton and help Trump. They are also investigating potential connections between Russian officials and the Trump campaign.

Senator Mark Warner, the top Democrat on one of the panels investigating the matter, the Senate Intelligence Committee, told CNN: "The level of credibility from the senior level of this administration really is suspect."

Warner said he wanted to hear from everyone who attended the June 2016 meeting.

"Whether we will be able to get the Russian nationals to come over and testify is an open question, (but) those people that our committee has jurisdiction over, the Americans, I sure as heck want to talk to all of them," Warner said.

Additional reporting by Caren Bohan; Editing by Andrea Ricci and Peter Cooney

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Case 1:17-cv-08153-LAK Document 33-2 Filed 10/31/18 Page 53 of 157

All quotes delayed a minimum of 15 minutes. See here for a complete list of exchanges and delays.

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Case 1:17-cv-08153-LAK Document 33-2 Filed 10/31/18 Page 55 of 157 Video

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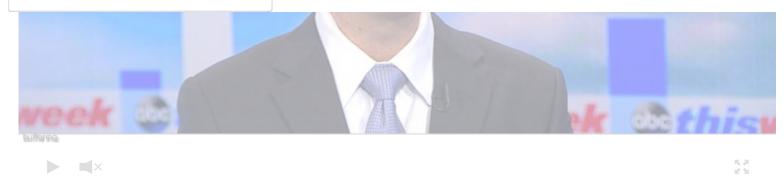
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COMING UP | Top House Intel Committee Dem: 'We can't accept anything Don Jr. says' about Russia meeting

A fone of the president's lawyers cited U.S. Secret Service inaction in his defense of Donald Trump Jr.'s meeting with a Russian attorney, whom the younger Trump believed to be in possession of incriminating in alternation about Hillary Clinton, attention has turned to the agency's duties in enforcing the law.



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"I wonder why the Secret Service, if this was nefarious, why the Secret Service allowed these people in," President Trump's personal attorney Jay

Case 1:17-cv-08153-LAK Document 33-2 Filed 10/31/18 Page 56 of 157 Sekulow said Sunday on ABC News' "This Week" of ABC News.

Russia Investigation

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the June 2016 meeting.

The law enforcement agency guickly responded to his question Sunday, saying in a statement, "Donald

Trump Jr. was not under Secret Service protection in June 2016."

"Thus we would not have screened anyone he was meeting with at that time," the statement continued.

The agency is authorized to protect "major presidential and vice presidential candidates" plus their spouses, the latter within 120 days of the general election, according to Section 3056 of the U.S. Code of Laws, which outlines the "powers, authorities and duties" of the Secret Service.

The secretary of homeland security decides who qualifies as major candidates.

6 months in, a record low for Trump, with troubles from Russia to health care

Children are protected if they are the offspring of a sitting president or vice president or of a former president until they reach age 16, though the secretary of homeland security may authorize additional security if he or she determines that "information or conditions warrant such protection."

No provision is made for candidates' immediate family members other than spouses before the election.

Even if Donald Trump Jr. had a Secret Service detail in June 2016, it's unclear whether agency duties would have included discovering the nature of a meeting, other than to ensure his safety. While agents are legally able to "make arrests without warrant for any offense against the United States," they do not traditionally sit in on private meetings and would, therefore, not necessarily be aware of any possible malfeasance.

While Donald Trump Sr. had Secret Service protection during the presidential campaign, it would not have included vetting people who met with members of his campaign staff. The agency didn't address whether it even knew about the meeting.

Donald Trump Jr. released emails last week concerning arrangements to meet with a Russian lawyer, Natalia Veselnitskaya, with the hope of receiving damning information about Clinton. The meeting came under additional scrutiny Friday with the revelation that additional people with connections to the Russian government attended the meeting, including a longtime lobbyist.

Sekulow's comment about the Secret Service was met with criticism on Twitter on Sunday, including from Frances Townsend, a former homeland security adviser to President George W. Bush, and Richard W. Painter, Bush's ethics lawyer.



Trump defender plunges to new low, blames Trump family betrayals on Secret Service who risk life to protect the President.

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Frances Townsend

@FranTownsend

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EXHIBIT KK



National Security

Sessions met with Russian envoy twice last year, encounters he later did not disclose

By Adam Entous, Ellen Nakashima and **Greg Miller** March 1, 2017

Then-Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.) spoke twice last year with Russia's ambassador to the United States, Justice Department officials said, encounters he did not disclose when asked about possible contacts between members of President Trump's campaign and representatives of Moscow during Sessions's confirmation hearing to become attorney general.

One of the meetings was a private conversation between Sessions and Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak that took place in September in the senator's office, at the height of what U.S. intelligence officials say was a Russian cyber campaign to upend the U.S. presidential race.

The previously undisclosed discussions could fuel new congressional calls for the appointment of a special counsel to investigate Russia's alleged role in the 2016 presidential election. As attorney general, Sessions oversees the Justice Department and the FBI, which have been leading investigations into Russian meddling and any links to Trump's associates. He has so far resisted calls to recuse himself.

When Sessions spoke with Kislyak in July and September, the senator was a senior member of the influential Armed Services Committee as well as one of Trump's top foreign policy advisers. Sessions played a prominent role supporting Trump on the stump after formally joining the campaign in February 2016.

At his Jan. 10 Judiciary Committee confirmation hearing, Sessions was asked by Sen. Al Franken (D-Minn.) what he would do if he learned of any evidence that anyone affiliated with the Trump campaign communicated with the Russian government in the course of the 2016 campaign.

"I'm not aware of any of those activities," he responded. He added: "I have been called a surrogate at a time or two in that campaign and I did not have communications with the Russians."

Officials said Sessions did not consider the conversations relevant to the lawmakers' questions and did not remember in detail what he discussed with Kislyak.

"There was absolutely nothing misleading about his answer," said Sarah Isgur Flores, Sessions's spokeswoman.

In January, Sen. Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.) asked Sessions for answers to written questions. "Several of the President-elect's nominees or senior advisers have Russian ties. Have you been in contact with anyone connected to any part of the Russian government about the 2016 election, either before or after election day?" Leahy wrote.

Sessions responded with one word: "No."

In a statement issued Wednesday night, Sessions said he "never met with any Russian officials to discuss issues of the campaign. I have no idea what this allegation is about. It is false."

Justice officials said Sessions met with Kislyak on Sept. 8 in his capacity as a member of the armed services panel rather than in his role as a Trump campaign surrogate.

"He was asked during the hearing about communications between Russia and the Trump campaign — not about meetings he took as a senator and a member of the Armed Services Committee," Flores said.

She added that Sessions last year had more than 25 conversations with foreign ambassadors as a senior member of the Armed Services Committee, including the British, Korean, Japanese, Polish, Indian, Chinese, Canadian, Australian and German ambassadors, in addition to Kislyak.

In the case of the September meeting, one department official who came to the defense of the attorney general said, "There's just not strong recollection of what was said."

The Russian ambassador did not respond to requests for comment about his contacts with Sessions.

The Washington Post contacted all 26 members of the 2016 Senate Armed Services Committee to see whether any lawmakers besides Sessions met with Kislyak in 2016. Of the 20 lawmakers who responded, every senator, including Chairman John McCain (R-Ariz.), said they did not meet with the Russian ambassador last year. The other lawmakers on the panel did not respond as of Wednesday evening.

"Members of the committee have not been beating a path to Kislyak's door," a senior Senate Armed Services Committee staffer said, citing tensions in relations with Moscow. Besides Sessions, the staffer added, "There haven't been a ton of members who are looking to meet with Kislyak for their committee duties."

Last month, The Post reported that Trump national security adviser Michael Flynn had discussed U.S. sanctions with Kislyak during the month before Trump took office, contrary to public assertions by Mike Pence, the vice president-elect, and other top Trump officials. Flynn was forced to resign the following week.

When asked to comment on Sessions's contacts with Kislyak, Franken said in a statement to The Post on Wednesday: "If it's true that Attorney General Sessions met with the Russian ambassador in the midst of the campaign, then I am very troubled that his response to my questioning during his confirmation hearing was, at best, misleading."

Franken added: "It is now clearer than ever that the attorney general cannot, in good faith, oversee an investigation at the Department of Justice and the FBI of the Trump-Russia connection, and he must recuse himself immediately."

Several Democratic members of the House on Wednesday night called on Sessions to resign from his post.

"After lying under oath to Congress about his own communications with the Russians, the Attorney General must resign," House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said in a statement, adding that "Sessions is not fit to serve as the top law enforcement officer of our country."

Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), a senior member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said on Twitter late Wednesday that "we need a special counsel to investigate Trump associates' ties to Russia."

Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.) said at a CNN town hall Wednesday night that if the substance of Sessions's conversations with the Russian ambassador proved to be improper or suspect, he too would join the call for Sessions to recuse himself from the investigation.

"If there is something there and it goes up the chain of investigation, it is clear to me that Jeff Sessions, who is my dear friend, cannot make that decision about Trump," Graham said — although he stressed that Sessions's contacts with the Russian ambassador could have been "innocent."

"But if there's something there that the FBI thinks is criminal in nature, then for sure you need a special prosecutor. If that day ever comes, I'll be the first one to say it needs to be somebody other than Jeff."

Current and former U.S. officials say they see Kislyak as a diplomat, not an intelligence operative. But they were not sure to what extent, if any, Kislyak was aware of or involved in the covert Russian election campaign.

Steven Hall, former head of Russia operations at the CIA, said that Russia would have been keenly interested in cultivating a relationship with Sessions because of his role on key congressional committees and as an early adviser to Trump.

Sessions's membership on the Armed Services Committee would have made him a priority for the Russian ambassador. "The fact that he had already placed himself at least ideologically behind Trump would have been an added bonus for Kislyak," Hall said.

Michael McFaul, a Stanford University professor who until 2014 served as U.S. ambassador to Russia, said he was not surprised that Kislyak would seek a meeting with Sessions. "The weird part is to conceal it," he said. "That was at the height of all the discussions of what Russia was doing during the election."

Two months before the September meeting, Sessions attended a Heritage Foundation event in July on the sidelines of the Republican National Convention that was attended by about 50 ambassadors. When the event was over, a small group of ambassadors approached Sessions as he was leaving the podium, and Kislyak was among them, the Justice Department official said.

Sessions then spoke individually to some of the ambassadors, including Kislyak, the official said. In the informal exchanges, the ambassadors expressed appreciation for his remarks and some of them invited him to events they were sponsoring, said the official, citing a former Sessions staffer who was at the event.

Democratic lawmakers, including senior members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, have demanded in recent weeks that Sessions recuse himself from the government's inquiry into possible ties between Trump associates and Russia.

Last week, Rep. Darrell Issa (R-Calif.), a senior member of the House Judiciary Committee, became one of the few Republican representatives to state publicly the need for an independent investigation.

Sessions's public position on Russia has evolved over time.

In an interview with RealClear World on the sidelines of the German Marshall Fund's Brussels Forum in March 2015, Sessions said the United States and Europe "have to unify" against Russia.

More than a year later, he spoke about fostering a stronger relationship with the Kremlin. In a July 2016 interview with CNN's "State of the Union," Sessions praised Trump's plan to build better relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"Donald Trump is right. We need to figure out a way to end this cycle of hostility that's putting this country at risk, costing us billions of dollars in defense, and creating hostilities," Sessions told CNN.

Asked whether he viewed Putin as a good or bad leader, Sessions told CNN: "We have a lot of bad leaders around the world that operate in ways we would never tolerate in the United States. But the question is, can we have a more peaceful, effective relationship with Russia? Utilizing interests that are similar in a realistic way to make this world a safer place and get off this dangerous hostility with Russia? I think it's possible."

Julie Tate, Robert Costa and Karoun Demirjian contributed to this report.

19544 Comments

Adam Entous

Adam Entous wrote about national security, foreign policy and intelligence. He left The Washington

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Post in December 2017. He joined the newspaper in 2016 after more than 20 years with the Wall Street Journal and Reuters, where he covered the Pentagon, CIA, White House and Congress.



Ellen Nakashima

Ellen Nakashima is a national security reporter for The Washington Post. She covers cybersecurity, surveillance, counterterrorism and intelligence issues. She has also served as a Southeast Asia correspondent and covered the White House and Virginia state politics. She joined The Post in 1995.

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EXHIBIT LL



National Security

Sessions discussed Trump campaign-related matters with Russian ambassador, U.S. intelligence intercepts show

By Adam Entous , Ellen Nakashima and Greg Miller July 21, 2017

Russia's ambassador to Washington told his superiors in Moscow that he discussed campaign-related matters, including policy issues important to Moscow, with Jeff Sessions during the 2016 presidential race, contrary to public assertions by the embattled attorney general, according to current and former U.S. officials.

Ambassador Sergey Kislyak's accounts of two conversations with Sessions — then a top foreign policy adviser to Republican candidate Donald Trump — were intercepted by U.S. spy agencies, which monitor the communications of senior Russian officials in the United States and in Russia. Sessions initially failed to disclose his contacts with Kislyak and then said that the meetings were not about the Trump campaign.

One U.S. official said that Sessions — who testified that he had no recollection of an April encounter — has provided "misleading" statements that are "contradicted by other evidence." A former official said that the intelligence indicates that Sessions and Kislyak had "substantive" discussions on matters including Trump's positions on Russia-related issues and prospects for U.S.-Russia relations in a Trump administration.

Sessions has said repeatedly that he never discussed campaign-related issues with Russian officials and that it was only in his capacity as a U.S. senator that he met with Kislyak.

"I never had meetings with Russian operatives or Russian intermediaries about the Trump campaign," Sessions said in March when he announced that he would recuse himself from matters relating to the FBI probe of Russian interference in the election and any connections to the Trump campaign.

Current and former U.S. officials said that that assertion is at odds with Kislyak's accounts of conversations in two encounters during the campaign, one in April ahead of Trump's first major foreign policy speech and another in July on the sidelines of the Republican National Convention.

The apparent discrepancy could pose new problems for Sessions as his position in the administration appears increasingly tenuous.

Trump, in an interview this week, expressed frustration with Sessions's recusing himself from the Russia probe and indicated regret at making the lawmaker from Alabama the nation's top law

enforcement officer. Trump also faulted Sessions as giving "bad answers" during his confirmation hearing about his Russia contacts during the campaign.

Officials emphasized that the information contradicting Sessions comes from U.S. intelligence on Kislyak's communications with the Kremlin, and they acknowledged that the Russian ambassador could have mischaracterized or exaggerated the nature of his interactions.

"Obviously I cannot comment on the reliability of what anonymous sources describe in a wholly uncorroborated intelligence intercept that the Washington Post has not seen and that has not been provided to me," said a Justice Department spokeswoman, Sarah Isgur Flores, in a statement. She reasserted that Sessions did not discuss interference in the election.

Russian and other foreign diplomats in Washington and elsewhere have been known, at times, to report false or misleading information to bolster their standing with their superiors or to confuse U.S. intelligence agencies.

But U.S. officials with regular access to Russian intelligence reports say Kislyak — whose tenure as ambassador to the United States ended recently — was known for accurately relaying details about his interactions with officials in Washington.

Sessions removed himself from direct involvement in the Russia investigation after it was revealed in The Washington Post that he had met with Kislyak at least twice in 2016, contacts he failed to disclose during his confirmation hearing in January.

"I did not have communications with the Russians," Sessions said when asked whether anyone affiliated with the Trump campaign had communicated with representatives of the Russian government.

He has since maintained that he misunderstood the scope of the question and that his meetings with Kislyak were strictly in his capacity as a U.S. senator. In a March appearance on Fox television, Sessions said, "I don't recall any discussion of the campaign in any significant way."

Sessions appeared to narrow that assertion further in extensive testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee in June, saying that he "never met with or had any conversation with any Russians or foreign officials concerning any type of interference with any campaign or election in the United States."

But when pressed for details during that hearing, Sessions qualified many of his answers by saying that he could "not recall" or did not have "any recollection."

A former U.S. official who read the Kislyak reports said that the Russian ambassador reported speaking with Sessions about issues that were central to the campaign, including Trump's positions on key policy matters of significance to Moscow.

Sessions had a third meeting with Kislyak in his Senate office in September. Officials declined to say whether U.S. intelligence agencies intercepted any Russian communications describing the third encounter.

As a result, the discrepancies center on two earlier Sessions-Kislyak conversations, including one that Sessions has acknowledged took place in July 2016 on the sidelines of the Republican National Convention.

By that point, Russian President Vladimir Putin had decided to embark on a secret campaign to help Trump win the White House by leaking damaging emails about Trump's rival, Democrat Hillary Clinton, according to U.S. intelligence agencies.

Although it remains unclear how involved Kislyak was in the covert Russian campaign to aid Trump, his superiors in Moscow were eager for updates about the candidate's positions, particularly regarding U.S. sanctions on Russia and long-standing disputes with the Obama administration over conflicts in Ukraine and Syria.

Kislyak also reported having a conversation with Sessions in April 2016 at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, where then-candidate Trump delivered his first major foreign policy address, according to the officials familiar with intelligence on Kislyak.

Sessions has said he does not remember any encounter with Kislyak at that event. In his June testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee, Sessions said, "I do not recall any conversations with any Russian official at the Mayflower Hotel."

Later in that hearing, Sessions said that "it's conceivable that that occurred. I just don't remember it."

Kislyak also was a key figure in the departure of national security adviser Michael Flynn, who was forced to leave that job after The Post revealed that he had discussed U.S. sanctions against Russia with Kislyak even while telling others in the Trump administration that he had not done so.

In that case, however, Flynn's phone conversations with Kislyak were intercepted by U.S. intelligence, providing irrefutable evidence. The intelligence on Sessions, by contrast, is based on Kislyak's accounts and not corroborated by other sources.

Former FBI director James B. Comey fueled speculation about the possibility of a Sessions-Kislyak meeting at the Mayflower when he told the same Senate committee on June 8 that the FBI had information about Sessions that would have made it "problematic" for him to be involved in overseeing the Russia probe.

Comey would not provide details of what information the FBI had, except to say that he could discuss it only privately with the senators. Current and former officials said he appeared to be alluding to intelligence on Kislyak's account of an encounter with Sessions at the Mayflower.

Senate Democrats later called on the FBI to investigate the event in April at the Mayflower hotel.

Sessions's role in removing Comey as FBI director angered many at the bureau and set in motion events that led to the appointment of former FBI director Robert S. Mueller III as a special counsel overseeing the Russia probe.

Trump's harsh words toward the attorney general fueled speculation this week that Sessions would be fired or would resign. So far, he has resisted resigning, saying that he intends to stay in the job "as long as that is appropriate."

Matt Zapotosky and Julie Tate contributed to this report.

Comments



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Adam Entous wrote about national security, foreign policy and intelligence. He left The Washington Post in December 2017. He joined the newspaper in 2016 after more than 20 years with the Wall Street Journal and Reuters, where he covered the Pentagon, CIA, White House and Congress.



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The New Hork Times

Kushner Is Said to Have Discussed a Secret Channel to Talk to Russia

By Maggie Haberman, Mark Mazzetti and Matt Apuzzo

May 26, 2017

WASHINGTON — Jared Kushner, President Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser, spoke in December with Russia's ambassador to the United States about establishing a secret communications channel between the Trump transition team and Moscow to discuss strategy in Syria and other policy issues, according to three people with knowledge of the discussion.

The conversation between Mr. Kushner and the ambassador, Sergey I. Kislyak, took place during a meeting at Trump Tower that Mr. Trump's presidential transition team did not acknowledge at the time. Also present at the meeting was Michael T. Flynn, the retired general who would become Mr. Trump's short-lived national security adviser, the three people said.

It is unclear who first proposed the communications channel, but the people familiar with the meeting said the idea was to have Mr. Flynn speak directly with a senior military official in Moscow to discuss Syria and other security issues. The communications channel was never set up, the people said.

The three people were not authorized to discuss the December meeting and spoke on the condition of anonymity. The White House declined to comment on Friday night.

News of the discussion was first reported by The Washington Post. The revelation has stoked new questions about Mr. Kushner's connections to Russian officials at a time when the F.B.I. is conducting a wide-ranging investigation into Russia's attempts to disrupt last year's presidential election and whether any of Mr. Trump's advisers assisted in the Russian campaign.

Current and former American officials said Mr. Kushner's activities, like those of many others around Mr. Trump, are under scrutiny as part of the investigation. But Mr. Kushner is not currently the subject of a criminal investigation.

In the days after the meeting with Mr. Kislyak, Mr. Kushner had a separate meeting with Sergey N. Gorkov, a Russian banker with close ties to Russia's president, Vladimir V. Putin.

The Post reported that the direct line between the transition team and the Kremlin in concept would have been conducted through Russian diplomatic facilities to avoid being monitored in American communication systems. The Post also reported that Mr. Kushner had proposed the communications channel and that it took Mr. Kislyak by surprise. The New York Times could not immediately confirm these details.

Even if the proposal was designed primarily as a conduit to discuss policy issues, it is unclear why such communications would have needed to be carried out though a secret channel.

American intelligence agencies first learned about the discussion several months ago, according to a senior American official who had been briefed on intelligence reports. It is unclear whether they learned about it from intercepted Russian communications or by other means.

Mr. Trump came into office promising improved relations with Russia on numerous issues, including greater cooperation to try to end the civil war in Syria. During the presidential campaign, he frequently criticized the Obama administration's Syria policy as unnecessarily antagonistic toward Russia.

The idea behind the secret communications channel, the three people said, was for Russian military officials to brief Mr. Flynn about the Syrian war and to discuss ways to cooperate there. Neither side followed up on it. And less than two weeks later, the idea was dropped when Mr. Trump announced that Rex W. Tillerson, a former chief executive of Exxon Mobil who had worked closely with Russian officials on energy deals, was his choice to become secretary of state.

The interactions between Mr. Trump's advisers and Mr. Kislyak have been a constant source of trouble for the new administration.

In February, Mr. Flynn had to resign as national security adviser for misleading Vice President Pence about the nature of phone calls he had in late December with the Russian ambassador. Mr. Flynn had told Mr. Pence that the two men had merely exchanged holiday pleasantries, when in fact they had discussed sanctions that the Obama administration had imposed on Russia for its campaign to disrupt the election.

Weeks later, Attorney General Jeff Sessions was forced to recuse himself from the Justice Department's Russia investigation after it was revealed that he had not disclosed during his confirmation process meetings he had with Mr. Kislyak in 2016. Then, during a May 10 Oval Office meeting with Mr. Kislyak and the Russian foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov, Mr. Trump disclosed highly classified intelligence about the Islamic State to the Russians.

During that meeting, Mr. Trump also told the Russian officials that the firing of the F.B.I. director, James B. Comey — who was leading the bureau's investigation into Moscow's activities during the campaign — had relieved "great pressure" on him, according to a document summarizing the meeting.

On Friday, Reuters reported that Mr. Kushner had at least two previously undisclosed phone calls with Mr. Kislyak between April 2016 and Election Day. The calls focused on how to improve economic relations between the United States and Russia, and how the two countries could better cooperate in the fight against Islamist extremism, Reuters reported, citing six current and former American officials.

That article said it was unclear whether Mr. Kushner spoke to Mr. Kislyak on his own or with other advisers to Mr. Trump.

Jamie Gorelick, a lawyer for Mr. Kushner, said in a statement that her client "participated in thousands of calls in this time period."

"He has no recollection of the calls as described," she said. "We have asked for the dates of such alleged calls so we may look into and respond."

"But we have not received such information," Ms. Gorelick added.

Two congressional intelligence committees are conducting parallel investigations into Russian interference in the presidential campaign, and in recent weeks, the panels have accelerated their efforts to obtain documents from Mr. Trump's campaign advisers, sometimes using subpoenas.

This week, the Senate Intelligence Committee asked the Trump campaign's treasurer to preserve and produce all documents — including phone records and emails — dating to its official start in June 2015, according to one person associated with the campaign. The person, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the continuing investigation, said former staff members had been instructed to cooperate with the committee's inquiry.

The person said the request came from Senators Richard M. Burr, Republican of North Carolina, and Mark Warner, Democrat of Virginia, the committee's two senior members.

Michael S. Schmidt, Adam Goldman and Matt Rosenberg contributed reporting.

A version of this article appears in print on May 27, 2017, on Page A1 of the New York edition with the headline: Kushner is Said to Have Mulled Russia Channel

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EXHIBIT NN

The Washington Post

Politics

Explanations for Kushner's meeting with head of Kremlin-linked bank don't match up

By David Filipov , Amy Brittain , Rosalind S. Helderman and Tom Hamburger June 1, 2017

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia — The White House and a Russian state-owned bank have very different explanations for why the bank's chief executive and Jared Kushner held a secret meeting during the presidential transition in December.

The bank maintained this week that the session was held as part of a new business strategy and was conducted with Kushner in his role as the head of his family's real estate business. The White House says the meeting was unrelated to business and was one of many diplomatic encounters the soon-to-be presidential adviser was holding ahead of Donald Trump's inauguration.

The contradiction is deepening confusion over Kushner's interactions with the Russians as the president's son-in-law emerges as a key figure in the FBI's investigation into potential coordination between Moscow and the Trump team.

The discrepancy has thrust Vnesheconombank, known for advancing the strategic interests of Russian President Vladimir Putin and for its role in a past U.S. espionage case, into the center of the controversy enveloping the White House. And it has highlighted the role played by the bank's 48-year-old chief executive, Sergey Gorkov, a graduate of the academy of the Federal Security Service, or FSB, the domestic intelligence arm of the former Soviet KGB, who was appointed by Putin to the post less than a year before his encounter with Kushner.

Either account of the meeting could bring complications for a White House undergoing intensifying scrutiny from a special counsel and multiple congressional committees.

A diplomatic meeting would have provided the bank, which has been under U.S. sanctions since 2014, a chance to press for rolling back the penalties even as the Obama administration was weighing additional retaliations against Moscow for Russia's interference in the U.S. election.

A business meeting between an international development bank and a real estate executive, coming as Kushner's company had been seeking financing for its troubled \$1.8 billion purchase of an office building on Fifth Avenue in New York, could raise questions about whether Kushner's personal financial interests were colliding with his impending role as a public official.

VEB, as Vnesheconombank is known, did not respond to a list of questions about the Kushner meeting and the institution's history and role in Russia. The bank declined to make Gorkov available for an interview.

Gorkov could draw new attention to the clashing story lines Friday, when he is scheduled to deliver public remarks to an economic conference in St. Petersburg. Gorkov, cornered Wednesday by a CNN reporter on the sidelines of the conference, responded "no comments" three times when asked about the Kushner meeting.

The Kushner-Gorkov meeting came after Kushner met with the Russian ambassador to the United States, Sergey Kislyak, in early December. At the meeting, Kushner suggested establishing a secure communications line between Trump officials and the Kremlin at a Russian diplomatic facility, according to U.S. officials who reviewed intelligence reports describing Kislyak's account.

The bank and the White House have declined to provide the exact date or location of the Kushner-Gorkov meeting, which was first reported in March by the New York Times.

Flight data reviewed by The Washington Post suggests that the meeting may have taken place on Dec. 13 or 14, about two weeks after Kushner's encounter with Kislyak.

A 19-seat twin-engine jet owned by a company linked to VEB flew from Moscow to the United States on Dec. 13 and departed from the Newark airport, outside New York City, at 5:01 p.m. Dec. 14, according to positional flight information provided by FlightAware, a company that tracks airplanes.

The Post could not confirm whether Gorkov was on the flight, but the plane's previous flights closely mirror Gorkov's publicly known travels in recent months, including his trip to St. Petersburg this week.

After leaving Newark on Dec. 14, the jet headed to Japan, where Putin was visiting on Dec. 15 and 16. The news media had reported that Gorkov would join the Russian president there.

White House spokeswoman Hope Hicks and Kushner's attorney said Kushner intends to share with investigators the details of his meeting with Gorkov.

"Mr. Kushner was acting in his capacity as a transition official and had many similar discussions with foreign representatives after the election," Hicks told The Post in a statement this week. "For example, he also started conversations with leaders from Saudi Arabia that led to the President's recent

successful international trip."

10/28/2018

The bank this week told The Post that it stood by a statement it issued in March that, as part of its new investment strategy, it had held meetings with "leading world financial institutions in Europe, Asia and America, as well as with the head of Kushner Companies."

Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said that the bank's activities "have nothing to do with the Kremlin." Peskov, like Trump, has frequently dismissed revelations about the meetings as "fake news" and "a witch hunt."

Officially, VEB is Russia's state economic development bank, set up to make domestic and foreign investments that will boost the Russian economy.

Practically speaking, according to experts, the bank functions as an arm of the Kremlin, boosting Putin's political priorities.

It funded the 2014 Sochi Olympics, a project used by Putin to signal that Russia holds a key role on the world stage.

VEB has also been used to promote the Kremlin's strategic aims abroad, experts say, financing projects across the Eastern bloc.

"Basically, VEB operates like Putin's slush fund," said Anders Aslund, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Center and a Russia expert who follows the bank's activities. "It carries out major Kremlin operations that Putin does not want to do through the state budget."

Before the United States imposed sanctions, VEB sought to extend its international reach to draw more investment to Russia. Among those named by the bank to an advisory board for a new global fund was Stephen Schwarzman, the CEO of the Blackstone Group and now an outside adviser to the Trump White House. Schwarzman declined to comment through a spokeswoman, who said the fund's advisory board has been inactive.

Gorkov was named to head VEB in February 2016, after eight years as a senior manager at Russia's largest state-owned bank, Sberbank. While Gorkov was a deputy head of Sberbank, it was one of the sponsors of the 2013 Miss Universe Pageant in Moscow produced by Trump, who owned the pageant.

Gorkov's personal relationship with Putin is unclear.

Some Russia watchers described Gorkov, who was not seen as being especially close to the Kremlin before his appointment, as an unlikely diplomatic link between the Kremlin and the Trump administration.

"I can think of many back channels that one might cultivate to have close, discreet, indirect communications with Putin. VEB's Gorkov would not make my list," said Michael McFaul, who was the U.S. ambassador to Russia under President Barack Obama.

Other observers suggested that Gorkov, the recipient of a "service to the Fatherland" medal, may have earned Putin's trust as a discreet go-between.

"He indeed is an FSB academy graduate, and for the Kremlin today it is a sign of trustworthiness," said Andrey Movchan, who heads the economic program at the Carnegie Moscow Center think tank.

VEB has played a role in Russian espionage efforts in the past, serving as the cover for a Russian operative convicted last year of spying in New York.

According to court documents, Evgeny Buryakov posed as the second-in-command at the bank's Manhattan office for at least three years while secretly meeting dozens of times with a Russian intelligence officer who tasked him with gathering intelligence on the U.S. economic system.

The court records show that Buryakov's handlers were also recorded discussing attempts to recruit an American whom government officials have confirmed was Carter Page, an energy consultant who later served as an informal adviser to Trump's campaign. Page has said he assisted the FBI with its investigation into the spy ring and provided the Russians no sensitive information.

The court documents show that the FBI recorded a conversation in which one of Buryakov's handlers described hearing an intelligence officer tell Buryakov's VEB boss that Buryakov worked for a Russian intelligence service.

VEB paid for Buryakov's legal fees after his arrest, the court documents show. The Russian Foreign Ministry at the time blasted the charges and accused the U.S. government of "building up spy hysteria."

Buryakov was sentenced to 30 months in prison but was released in April for good behavior. He was immediately deported to Moscow. Efforts by The Post to reach Buryakov through family members were unsuccessful.

VEB, along with other Russian state-owned institutions, has suffered financially since 2014, when the United States imposed economic sanctions following Russia's incursion into Crimea.

Gorkov's meeting with Kushner took place at a time of major changes within the bank.

On Dec. 21, VEB announced that its proposed 2021 development strategy — which Gorkov dubbed "VEB 2.0" — had been approved by its supervisory board, which is chaired by Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev.

As a result of the sanctions, U.S. companies are prohibited from lending the bank money or buying equity in the institution, an attempt to drain resources from the Russian economy.

Case 1:17-expination of the company 10/28/2018

The sanctions would not prohibit Kushner from conducting a business negotiation with VEB or even prevent the Russian bank from investing in a U.S. firm.

Experts on Russia's security services said that it would have been unlikely for Gorkov to meet with Kushner and not discuss sanctions.

Gennady Gudkov, a reserve colonel in the FSB who is now a leader of a small opposition party, said that Russian business leaders are looking for ways to lobby for the softening of sanctions. "This activity is constant," Gudkov said in an interview. "They are trying however they can, even informally, to lower the sanctions."

In late December, Gorkov told Russian state television that he hoped "the situation with sanctions will change for the better."

In February, Gorkov met with Putin to update him on the bank's status. "We are confident of its future," he told the Russian leader, according to a transcript released by Putin's office, asserting the bank had many new deals in the works.

"Good," Putin said.

Brittain, Helderman and Hamburger reported from Washington. Natalya Abbakumova in Moscow and Alice Crites in Washington contributed to this report.

1085 Comments



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EXHIBIT 00



Opinions

Why did Obama dawdle on Russia's hacking?

By David Ignatius

January 12, 2017

This column has been updated below.

"Something is rotten in the state of Denmark," mutters Marcellus as ghosts and mad spirits haunt Elsinore castle in the first act of Shakespeare's "Hamlet."

After this past week of salacious leaks about foreign espionage plots and indignant denials, people must be wondering if something is rotten in the state of our democracy. How can we dispel the dark rumors that, as Hamlet says, "shake our disposition"?

I'd suggest four questions to clear the haze of allegation and recrimination that surrounds Presidentelect Donald Trump and our intelligence agencies a week before his inauguration. Getting answers may take months — but that's the best way to avoid a Shakespearean tragic ending.

Question 1: Did Trump's campaign encourage Russia's alleged hacking to hurt his rival Hillary Clinton and help him, and does Russia have any leverage over him? Trump finally conceded at his news conference Wednesday that "as far as hacking, I think it was Russia," but he insisted he has "no dealings with Russia" and "no loans with Russia." He didn't answer a question about whether he or anyone from his staff had contact with Russia during the campaign.

The country needs to know what's true and what's false. The Post and other news organizations spent months trying to check out a dossier about possible Russia-Trump contacts prepared by a former British intelligence officer. The press couldn't confirm alleged meetings during the campaign. The FBI and other intelligence agencies have had the dossier, too, since late summer. Their investigation remains open, it appears.

A full investigation could establish who did what, and when. In a case where a foreign intelligence service allegedly ran a covert action against the United States' political system, aborting the inquiry would be scandalous.

Question 2: Why did the Obama administration wait so long to deal with Russia's apparent hacking? This is the Hamlet puzzle in our drama. Like the prince of Denmark, President Obama delayed taking action even as evidence mounted of dastardly deeds. The first stories about Russian hacking broke in the summer. In September, the "Gang of Eight" — the top congressional leadership on intelligence was getting detailed briefings on the hacking. The FBI by then had obtained the British ex-spy's dossier.

The intelligence community issued a statement Oct. 7 charging that "Russia's senior-most officials" had sought to "interfere with the U.S. election process." Given that, why didn't Obama do more?

The White House probably feared that further action might trigger a process of escalation that could bring even worse election turmoil. Trump was barnstorming the country claiming that the election was rigged and warning he might not accept the outcome. Did the administration worry that the Russians would take additional steps to hurt Clinton and help Trump, and might disrupt balloting itself? We need to know.

Question 3: What discussions has the Trump team had with Russian officials about future relations? Trump said Wednesday that his relationship with President Vladimir Putin is "an asset, not a liability." Fair enough, but until he's president, Trump needs to let Obama manage U.S.-Russia policy.

Retired Lt. Gen. Michael T. Flynn, Trump's choice for national security adviser, cultivates close Russian contacts. He has appeared on Russia Today and received a speaking fee from the cable network, which was described in last week's unclassified intelligence briefing on Russian hacking as "the Kremlin's principal international propaganda outlet."

According to a senior U.S. government official, Flynn phoned Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak several times on Dec. 29, the day the Obama administration announced the expulsion of 35 Russian officials as well as other measures in retaliation for the hacking. What did Flynn say, and did it undercut the U.S. sanctions? The Logan Act (though never enforced) bars U.S. citizens from correspondence intending to influence a foreign government about "disputes" with the United States. Was its spirit violated? The Trump campaign didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

If the Trump team's contacts helped discourage the Russians from a counter-retaliation, maybe that's a good thing. But we ought to know the facts.

Question 4: Finally, what's the chance that Russian intelligence has gamed its covert action more subtly than we realize? Applying a counter-intelligence lens, it's worth asking whether the Russians hoped to be discovered, and whether Russian operatives fed the former MI6 officer's controversial dossier deliberately, to sow further chaos.

These questions need to be answered — not to undermine Trump, but to provide a factual base to help the country recover from an attack on its political system. As Trump rightly says, "fake news" threatens our democracy. Truth will protect it.

UPDATE: The Trump transition team did not respond Thursday night to a request for comment. But two team members called with information Friday morning. A first Trump official confirmed that Flynn had spoken with Kislyak by phone, but said the calls were before sanctions were announced and didn't cover that topic. This official later added that Flynn's initial call was to express condolences to Kislyak after the terrorist killing of the Russian ambassador to Ankara Dec. 19, and that Flynn made a second call Dec. 28 to express condolences for the shoot-down of a Russian plane carrying a choir to

Syria. In that second call, Flynn also discussed plans for a Trump-Putin conversation sometime after the inauguration. In addition, a second Trump official said the Dec. 28 call included an invitation from Kislyak for a Trump administration official to visit Kazakhstan for a conference in late January.

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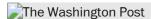
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EXHIBIT PP



National Security

National security adviser Flynn discussed sanctions with Russian ambassador, despite denials, officials say

By Greg Miller, Adam Entous and Ellen Nakashima February 9, 2017

National security adviser Michael Flynn privately discussed U.S. sanctions against Russia with that country's ambassador to the United States during the month before President Trump took office, contrary to public assertions by Trump officials, current and former U.S. officials said.

Flynn's communications with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak were interpreted by some senior U.S. officials as an inappropriate and potentially illegal signal to the Kremlin that it could expect a reprieve from sanctions that were being imposed by the Obama administration in late December to punish Russia for its alleged interference in the 2016 election.

Flynn on Wednesday denied that he had discussed sanctions with Kislyak. Asked in an interview whether he had ever done so, he twice said, "No."

On Thursday, Flynn, through his spokesman, backed away from the denial. The spokesman said Flynn "indicated that while he had no recollection of discussing sanctions, he couldn't be certain that the topic never came up."

Officials said this week that the FBI is continuing to examine Flynn's communications with Kislyak. Several officials emphasized that while sanctions were discussed, they did not see evidence that Flynn had an intent to convey an explicit promise to take action after the inauguration.

Flynn's contacts with the ambassador attracted attention within the Obama administration because of the timing. U.S. intelligence agencies were then concluding that Russia had waged a cyber campaign designed in part to help elect Trump; his senior adviser on national security matters was discussing the potential consequences for Moscow, officials said.

The talks were part of a series of contacts between Flynn and Kislyak that began before the Nov. 8 election and continued during the transition, officials said. In a recent interview, Kislyak confirmed that he had communicated with Flynn by text message, by phone and in person, but declined to say whether they had discussed sanctions.

The emerging details contradict public statements by incoming senior administration officials including Mike Pence, then the vice president-elect. They acknowledged only a handful of text messages and calls exchanged between Flynn and Kislyak late last year and denied that either ever raised the subject of sanctions.

"They did not discuss anything having to do with the United States' decision to expel diplomats or impose censure against Russia," Pence said in an interview with CBS News last month, noting that he had spoken with Flynn about the matter. Pence also made a more sweeping assertion, saying there had been no contact between members of Trump's team and Russia during the campaign. To suggest otherwise, he said, "is to give credence to some of these bizarre rumors that have swirled around the candidacy."

Neither of those assertions is consistent with the fuller account of Flynn's contacts with Kislyak provided by officials who had access to reports from U.S. intelligence and law enforcement agencies that routinely monitor the communications of Russian diplomats. Nine current and former officials, who were in senior positions at multiple agencies at the time of the calls, spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence matters.

All of those officials said Flynn's references to the election-related sanctions were explicit. Two of those officials went further, saying that Flynn urged Russia not to overreact to the penalties being imposed by President Barack Obama, making clear that the two sides would be in position to review the matter after Trump was sworn in as president.

"Kislyak was left with the impression that the sanctions would be revisited at a later time," said a former official.

A third official put it more bluntly, saying that either Flynn had misled Pence or that Pence misspoke. An administration official stressed that Pence made his comments based on his conversation with Flynn. The sanctions in question have so far remained in place.

The nature of Flynn's pre-inauguration message to Kislyak triggered debate among officials in the Obama administration and intelligence agencies over whether Flynn had violated a law against unauthorized citizens interfering in U.S. disputes with foreign governments, according to officials familiar with that debate. Those officials were already alarmed by what they saw as a Russian assault on the U.S. election.

U.S. officials said that seeking to build such a case against Flynn would be daunting. The law against U.S. citizens interfering in foreign diplomacy, known as the Logan Act, stems from a 1799 statute that has never been prosecuted. As a result, there is no case history to help guide authorities on when to proceed or how to secure a conviction.

Officials also cited political sensitivities. Prominent Americans in and out of government are so frequently in communication with foreign officials that singling out one individual — particularly one poised for a top White House job — would invite charges of political persecution.

Former U.S. officials also said aggressive enforcement would probably discourage appropriate contact. Michael McFaul, who served as U.S. ambassador to Russia during the Obama

administration, said that he was in Moscow meeting with officials in the weeks leading up to Obama's 2008 election win.

"As a former diplomat and U.S. government official, one needs to be able to have contact with foreigners to do one's job," McFaul said. McFaul, a Russia scholar, said he was careful never to signal pending policy changes before Obama took office.

On Wednesday, Flynn said that he first met Kislyak in 2013 when Flynn was director of the Defense Intelligence Agency and made a trip to Moscow. Kislyak helped coordinate that trip, Flynn said.

Flynn said that he spoke to Kislyak on a range of subjects in late December, including arranging a call between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Trump after the inauguration and expressing his condolences after Russia's ambassador to Turkey was assassinated. "I called to say I couldn't believe the murder of their ambassador," Flynn said. Asked whether there was any mention of sanctions in his communications with Kislyak, Flynn said, "No."

Kislyak characterized his conversations with Flynn as benign during a brief interview at a conference this month. "It's something all diplomats do," he said.

Kislyak said that he had been in contact with Flynn since before the election, but declined to answer questions about the subjects they discussed. Kislyak is known for his assiduous cultivation of high-level officials in Washington and was seated in the front row of then-GOP candidate Trump's first major foreign policy speech in April of last year. The ambassador would not discuss the origin of his relationship with Flynn.

In his CBS interview, Pence said that Flynn had "been in touch with diplomatic leaders, security leaders in some 30 countries. That's exactly what the incoming national security adviser should do."

Official concern about Flynn's interactions with Kislyak was heightened when Putin declared on Dec. 30 that Moscow would not retaliate after the Obama administration announced a day earlier the expulsion of 35 suspected Russian spies and the forced closure of Russian-owned compounds in Maryland and New York.

Instead, Putin said he would focus on "the restoration of Russia-United States relations" after Obama left office, and put off considering any retaliatory measures until Moscow had a chance to evaluate Trump's policies.

Trump responded with effusive praise for Putin. "Great move on the delay," he said in a posting to his Twitter account. "I always knew he was very smart."

Putin's reaction cut against a long practice of reciprocation on diplomatic expulsions, and came after his foreign minister had vowed that there would be reprisals against the United States.

Putin's muted response — which took White House officials by surprise — raised some officials' suspicions that Moscow may have been promised a reprieve, and triggered a search by U.S. spy agencies for clues.

"Something happened in those 24 hours" between Obama's announcement and Putin's response, a former senior U.S. official said. Officials began poring over intelligence reports, intercepted communications and diplomatic cables, and saw evidence that Flynn and Kislyak had communicated by text and telephone around the time of the announcement.

Trump transition officials acknowledged those contacts weeks later after they were reported in The Washington Post but denied that sanctions were discussed. Trump press secretary Sean Spicer said Jan. 13 that Flynn had "reached out to" the Russian ambassador on Christmas Day to extend holiday greetings. On Dec. 28, as word of the Obama sanctions spread, Kislyak sent a message to Flynn requesting a call. "Flynn took that call," Spicer said, adding that it "centered on the logistics of setting up a call with the president of Russia and [Trump] after the election."

Other officials were categorical. "I can tell you that during his call, sanctions were not discussed whatsoever," a senior transition official told The Post at the time. When Pence faced questions on television that weekend, he said "those conversations that happened to occur around the time that the United States took action to expel diplomats had nothing whatsoever to do with those sanctions."

Current and former U.S. officials said that assertion was not true.

Like Trump, Flynn has shown an affinity for Russia that is at odds with the views of most of his military and intelligence peers. Flynn raised eyebrows in 2015 when he appeared in photographs seated next to Putin at a lavish party in Moscow for the Kremlin-controlled RT television network.

In an earlier interview with The Post, Flynn acknowledged that he had been paid through his speakers bureau to give a speech at the event and defended his attendance by saying he saw no distinction between RT and U.S. news channels, including CNN.

A retired U.S. Army lieutenant general, Flynn served multiple deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan in the years after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks — tours in which he held a series of high-level intelligence assignments working with U.S. Special Operations forces hunting al-Qaeda operatives and Islamist militants.

Former colleagues said that narrow focus led Flynn to see the threat posed by Islamist groups as overwhelming other security concerns, including Russia's renewed aggression. Instead, Flynn came to see America's long-standing adversary as a potential ally against terrorist groups, and himself as being in a unique position to forge closer ties after traveling to Moscow in 2013 while serving as director of the Defense Intelligence Agency.

Flynn has frequently boasted that he was the first DIA director to be invited into the headquarters of Russia's military intelligence directorate, known as the GRU, although at least one of his predecessors was granted similar access. "Flynn thought he developed some rapport with the GRU chief," a former senior U.S. military official said.

U.S. intelligence agencies say they have tied the GRU to Russia's theft of troves of email messages from Democratic Party computer networks and accuse Moscow of then delivering those materials to the anti-secrecy group WikiLeaks, which published them in phases during the campaign to hurt Hillary Clinton, Trump's Democratic rival.

Flynn was pushed out of the DIA job in 2014 amid concerns about his management of the sprawling agency. He became a fierce critic of the Obama administration before joining the Trump campaign last year.

Karen DeYoung, Tom Hamburger, Julie Tate and Philip Rucker contributed to this report.

№ 5519 Comments



Greg Miller

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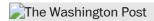


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EXHIBIT QQ



Fact Checker Analysis

Michael Flynn's guilty plea: A comprehensive timeline

By Glenn Kessler

Former national security adviser Michael Flynn pleaded guilty on Friday to lying to the FBI about contacts he had with a Russian ambassador. Here is a comprehensive timeline of the actions and events that led to this moment, based on government documents and news reports.

Dec. 22, 2016

Obama administration action

The Obama administration signals that it may not veto an Egyptian-sponsored United Nations Security Council resolution that condemned Israeli housing construction in East Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank as a "flagrant violation under international law" that was "dangerously imperiling the viability" of a peace deal between the Israelis and Palestinians.

Incoming Trump administration response

Flynn spoke to Sergey Kislyak, the then Russian ambassador, and asked Russia to delay or defeat a pending U.N. Security Council resolution, according to a criminal information filed in federal court by the special prosecutor. The conversation concerned Resolution 2334, demanding Israel stop all settlement activity. A statement of offense filed in court says that a "a very senior transition official" directed Flynn to call Russia and other governments about the resolution. The official is not identified but media reports said it is Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law. President-elect Trump was vocally opposed to the U.N. resolution, tweeting on the morning of Flynn's conversation that it should be vetoed.



(The resolution was adopted on Dec. 23 by the council in a 14-to-zero vote, with the United States abstaining.)

Dec. 29, 2016

Obama administration action

The Obama administration announces measures against Russia in retaliation for what U.S. officials

characterized as interference in the 2016 election, ordering the expulsion of Russian "intelligence operatives" and slapping new sanctions on state agencies and individuals suspected in the hacks of U.S. computer systems.

Russian response

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov announces 35 U.S. diplomats will be declared persona non grata. "We, of course, cannot leave unanswered the insults of the kind; reciprocity is the law of diplomacy and foreign relations," Lavrov says. "Thus, the Russian Foreign Ministry and officials of other authorities have suggested the Russian president to announce 31 personnel of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow and four diplomats from the Consulate General in St. Petersburg persona non grata."

Lavrov's message is echoed in a series of tweets by the Russian Embassy in Washington, promising an announcement on Dec. 30:



Incoming Trump administration response

Flynn speaks by phone with Kislyak and discusses the sanctions and suggests the possibility of sanctions relief once Trump is sworn into office. The call is monitored by U.S. intelligence agencies.

The criminal information says Flynn asked Kislyak to "refrain from escalating the situation in response to sanctions that the United States had imposed on Russia that same day." Kislyak subsequently told Flynn "that Russia has chosen to moderate its response to those sanctions as a result of his request," the information says.

Before and after his conversations with Kislyak, Flynn called senior Trump transition officials at Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate to discuss the conversations, according to a statement of offense filed in court. The officials are not identified.

Dec. 30

Russian government action

In a surprise, Russian President Vladimir Putin announces in a statement that Russia will not take action against the sanctions.

"As it proceeds from international practice, Russia has reasons to respond in kind," Putin says.

"Although we have the right to retaliate, we will not resort to irresponsible 'kitchen' diplomacy but will plan our further steps to restore Russian-US relations based on the policies of the Trump Administration." Putin's announcement is made in the afternoon of Dec. 30, or morning in the United States.

Incoming Trump administration response

Trump tweets approvingly and pins the tweet at the top of his Twitter page. (The White House insists that Trump had no prior knowledge of Flynn's conversations about sanctions with Kislyak.)



Dec. 31

Kislyak calls Flynn and tells him that Russia has decided not respond to the sanctions because of Flynn's request, the statement of offense says. Flynn then calls senior members of the Trump transition team to tell them about the conversation.

Jan. 12, 2017

The Washington Post's David Ignatius reports that Flynn and Kislyak spoke around the time of sanctions announcement. "According to a senior U.S. government official, Flynn phoned Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak several times on Dec. 29, the day the Obama administration announced the expulsion of 35 Russian officials as well as other measures in retaliation for the hacking. What did Flynn say, and did it undercut the U.S. sanctions?"

Jan. 13

Incoming White House press secretary Sean Spicer, in a conference call with reporters, denies that sanctions were discussed. The conversation between Flynn and Kislyak had "centered on the logistics" of a post-inauguration call between Trump and Putin. "That was it, plain and simple," Spicer says.

Jan. 14

Vice President-elect Mike Pence and Flynn have a conversation, in which Pence says Flynn assured him that "the conversations that took place at that time were not in any way related to the new U.S. sanctions against Russia or the expulsion of diplomats," according to an account Pence later gave "Fox News Sunday."

Jan. 15

Pence, during an appearance on CBS's "Face the Nation," denies that sanctions were discussed. Saying he had spoken about the issue with Flynn, Pence says the incoming national security adviser and Kislyak "did not discuss anything having to do with the United States' decision to expel diplomats or impose censure against Russia."

Pence adds: "General Flynn has been in touch with diplomatic leaders, security leaders in some 30 countries. That's exactly what the incoming national security adviser should do. But what I can confirm, having spoken to him about it, is that those conversations that happened to occur around the time that the United States took action to expel diplomats had nothing whatsoever to do with those sanctions."

Meanwhile, incoming White House chief of staff Reince Priebus, on NBC's "Meet the Press," says: "I have talked to General Flynn. None of that came up, and the subject matter of sanctions or the actions taken by the Obama administration did not come up in the conversation."

Jan. 20

Trump takes the oath of office and becomes president.

Jan. 23

Spicer, in his first official news briefing, again is asked about Flynn's communications with Kislyak. Spicer says that he had talked to Flynn about the issue "again last night." There was just "one call," Spicer says, adding that it covered four subjects: a plane crash that claimed the lives of a Russian military choir; Christmas greetings; Russian-led talks over the Syrian civil war; and the logistics of setting up a call between Putin and Trump. Spicer insists that was the extent of the conversation.

Jan. 24

Flynn is interviewed by the FBI about his conversations with Kislyak. (He now admits he lied repeatedly during the interview.)

Jan. 26

Acting Attorney General Sally Yates, accompanied by an aide, goes to the White House and tells White

House counsel Don McGahn that, contrary to Flynn's claims to White House officials, sanctions had been discussed in the calls, based on the monitoring of the conversations by intelligence agencies. She also warns that Flynn is vulnerable to blackmail.

"We also told the White House counsel that General Flynn had been interviewed by the FBI on February [sic.] 24," Yates said in congressional testimony on May 8. "Mr. McGahn asked me how he did and I declined to give him an answer to that. And we then walked through with Mr. McGahn essentially why we were telling them about this and the first thing we did was to explain to Mr. McGahn that the underlying conduct that General Flynn had engaged in was problematic in and of itself. Secondly, we told him we felt like the vice president and others were entitled to know that the information that they were conveying to the American people wasn't true."

"The president was immediately informed of the situation," Spicer told reporters on Feb. 14, after Flynn's departure. The White House counsel determined that Flynn would have broken no laws in his discussions, Spicer adds. The White House has not disclosed the length or depth of the counsel's inquiry into that question, except to say it was "extensive" and took "days."

Jan. 27

McGahn asks Yates to come to the White House again to discuss the matter further. Yates testified that he did not indicate whether he had discussed the Flynn situation with anyone else at the White House. McGahn asked why the Justice Department would be concerned whether one White House official lied to another, she said. "Logic would tell you that you don't want the national security adviser to be in a position where the Russians have leverage over him," she said.

McGahn also asks to see the underlying evidence. Yates says she would work with the FBI to assemble the material and McGahn's review is scheduled for Jan. 30.

That night, Trump and then-FBI Director James B. Comey have dinner at the White House. They disagree on who asked for the one-on-one meeting, which Comey says was unusual. Comey says Trump asked him that night for his "loyalty." Trump has denied this, telling one interviewer: "I didn't, but I don't think it would be a bad question to ask."

Jan. 30

Trump fires Yates, allegedly over an unrelated matter — her conclusion that Trump's executive order barring travelers from seven Muslim-majority countries is "unlawful." (The executive order is later blocked by the courts.)

Feb. 9

The Washington Post, citing nine sources, reports that Flynn had discussed sanctions in the phone calls. Flynn initially denied he had discussed sanctions in an interview with The Post but then amended his comment. He "indicated that while he had no recollection of discussing sanctions, he couldn't be certain that the topic never came up."

According to an aide to Pence, not until The Post's report appeared did the vice president learn that Flynn had given him false information about his contacts with Kislyak. So, according to the White House's account, Trump had known of the Flynn's false statements for two weeks but had not informed Pence.

Feb. 10

Trump, asked about the media reports about Flynn, suggests it is news to him: "I don't know about that. I haven't seen it. What report is that? I haven't seen that. I'll look into that." Spicer later says Trump was saying he had not seen the specific report in The Post, not that he was unaware that Flynn had spoken to Kislyak about sanctions.

Feb. 13

The Post reports that the White House had known for weeks that Flynn had misled about the nature of the calls. Flynn is forced to resign within hours after the article is posted.

Feb. 14

In an Oval Office meeting, Trump asks Comey to end the investigation of Flynn, according to Comey.

Comey's version (from written congressional testimony, June 8):

"On February 14, I went to the Oval Office for a scheduled counterterrorism briefing of the President," Comey said in his congressional testimony. "The President signaled the end of the briefing by thanking the group and telling them all that he wanted to speak to me alone....When the door by the grandfather clock closed, and we were alone, the President began by saying, 'I want to talk about Mike Flynn.' ... The President began by saying Flynn hadn't done anything wrong in speaking with the Russians, but he had to let him go because he had misled the Vice President. He added that he had other concerns about Flynn, which he did not then specify... 'He is a good guy and has been through a lot.' He repeated that Flynn hadn't done anything wrong on his calls with the Russians, but had misled the Vice President. He then said, 'I hope you can see your way clear to letting this go, to letting Flynn go. He is a good guy. I hope you can let this go.' I replied only that 'he is a good guy.' ...I did not say I would 'let this go.'"

Under questioning by lawmakers, Comey said that given the setting and the fact that Trump asked to see him alone, he took the president's words as a directive. "It rings in my ear as kind of, 'Will no one rid me of this meddlesome priest?" Comey said, regarding Henry II's alleged words that led to the murder of Thomas Becket, the archbishop of Canterbury, in 1170. He said that at time Flynn was in "legal jeopardy."

Trump's version:

Trump's lawyer, Marc Kasowitz, said after Comey's testimony: "The president never in form or substance directed or suggested that Mr. Comey stop investigating anyone, including the president never suggested that Mr. Comey, quote, 'Let Flynn go,' close quote." Trump also denied he asked Comey to ease up on the investigation.

Feb. 16

At a news conference, a reporter directly asks Trump: "Did you direct Mike Flynn to discuss sanctions with the Russian ambassador?" Trump answers, "No, I didn't."

Trump adds: "I fired him because of what he said to Mike Pence. Very simple. Mike was doing his job. He was calling countries and his counterparts. So, it certainly would have been OK with me if he did it. I would have directed him to do it if I thought he wasn't doing it. I didn't direct him, but I would have directed him because that's his job."

May 9

Comey is fired. In his note to Comey, Trump says, "I greatly appreciate you informing me, on three separate occasions, that I am not under investigation." (Trump appears to be referring to the conversations recounted by Comey on Jan. 6, Jan. 27 and March 30.)

May 10

Trump meets with Russian officials, including Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Ambassador Kislyak. "I just fired the head of the F.B.I.," Trump says, according to a White House summary of the conversation. "He was crazy, a real nut job. I faced great pressure because of Russia. That's taken off."

Trump adds: "I'm not under investigation."

May 17

Deputy Attorney General Rod J. Rosenstein appoints a special counsel, former FBI director Robert S. Mueller III, to oversee the Russia probe and investigate any related matters, such as obstruction of justice and perjury.

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EXHIBIT RR

USA

Even Before Inauguration, Trump Asserts Himself on Policy Matters

December 23, 2016 3:51 PM William Gallo

Donald Trump won't become president for another four weeks, though at times you'd hardly know it.

Since winning the election, President-elect Trump has repeatedly asserted himself on foreign and domestic issues, whether via his Twitter account, cable news interviews, or official transition team statements.

Trump's behavior strains a longstanding "one president at a time" tradition observed by presidents-elect. Many critics say that in doing so, Trump risks muddying U.S. policy and could set a precedent that complicates future presidential transitions.

"He's obviously trying to make himself a player, and I think that crosses a line that other presidents-elect have been reluctant to cross," said Bruce Buchanan, who specializes in presidential politics at the University of Texas.

In the past month and a half, Trump has offered a running commentary on the issues of the day, much like he did during his presidential campaign. But Trump has sometimes gone a step further, even challenging certain policies of President Barack Obama.

This week, Trump released a statement urging the U.S. to veto a U.N. Security Council resolution that condemns Israeli settlements in Palestinian territories. Israeli officials have said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reached out to Trump after learning the Obama administration planned to abstain from a vote.

Earlier, Trump broke decades of U.S. diplomatic protocol by speaking with Taiwan's leader, Tsai Ing-wen. He later called into question U.S. support for the "one China" policy. After China seized a U.S. underwater drone in the South China Sea, Trump called the act "unprecedented," before changing course and tweeting that the U.S. should refuse to take it back.

Trump has tweeted that he would like to "greatly strengthen and expand" the U.S. nuclear capability.

Last week, he held separate meetings with top U.S. military officials and the CEOs of Boeing and Lockheed Martin to negotiate defense spending costs. He has also negotiated with U.S. companies to keep jobs in the country in exchange for tax breaks and other benefits.

Obama has not criticized Trump's handling of the transition, other than to note on two separate occasions that there is only "one president at a time." But the president has moved decisively on his part, abstaining from the UN vote on Israel and banning offshore drilling in areas of the *Arctic* and Atlantic oceans indefinitely. His administration has also taken steps to eliminate the program that was used to track mostly Arab and Muslim men after the 9/11 terror attacks.

The move makes it harder for Trump to initiate a similar program, something he has suggested he would like to do.

'Respectful'

Trump's behavior stands in contrast to that of his predecessors, many of whom have refused to even comment on matters of policy out of respect for the incumbent.

While no law forbids Trump from commenting or offering policy suggestions, some critics have said he could be in violation of the Logan Act, a federal law that prohibits private citizens from conducting foreign policy and that also applies in theory to incoming presidents.

Earlier this month, Congressman Jared Huffman, a Democrat, introduced legislation that would "clarify" that the Logan Act covers the activities of the president-elect during transition periods.

In a statement, Huffman said the so-called "One President at a Time Act" would require that the president-elect "cannot conduct foreign policy matters without the authorization of the United States government."

"Not only is it an unacceptable intrusion for a President-elect to start engaging in foreign policy matters before they are in office — let alone before they are fully briefed on complex and fragile geopolitical situations — it is dangerous and harms America's standing in the world," the statement said.

Speaking to MSNBC on Friday, Trump's incoming press secretary Sean Spicer denied Trump was overstepping his bounds, noting the cordial relationship that has developed between Trump and Obama.

"I would argue that he has been very respectful of the idea that we have one president at a time," Spicer said. "He has been in constant contact with President Obama, making it clear what his views are on certain things. And he has been very respectful of the president."

EXHIBIT SS

The President-Elect and the Logan Act

by Steve Vladeck

January 13, 2017

The *Washington Post*'s David Ignatius has a really thoughtful new column summarizing the big questions surrounding the President-Elect, Russia, hacking, and the election. As part of one of the four questions ("why on this night..."), Ignatius wonders if the various contacts between Trump subordinates and the Russian government (especially conversations between General Flynn and the Russian Ambassador to the United States) violated the Logan Act — a 1799 (what we in the legal business call "old") statute that makes it a crime if a U.S. citizen,

without authority of the United States, directly or indirectly commences or carries on any correspondence or intercourse with any foreign government or any officer or agent thereof, with intent to influence the measures or conduct of any foreign government or of any officer or agent thereof, in relation to any disputes or controversies with the United States, or to defeat the measures of the United States...

I am not an especially big fan of the Logan Act either in general or in contexts like these — where it is raised as a potential basis for investigating / prosecuting elected officials. As I explained in a 2015 *Lawfare* post, there are three different legal problems, two of which are structural, and one of which is specific to contexts like this one. To the structural problems, the Logan Act predates the Supreme Court's 20th-century invigoration of the First and Fifth Amendments, which, between them, do not look too kindly on either content-based restrictions on speech (which the Logan Act clearly is), or criminal laws that do not clearly articulate the line between lawful and unlawful conduct (which the Logan Act may well not do). The Logan Act also may be the textbook case for the defense of "desuetude" — a claim that a criminal statute has

Case 1:17-cv-08153-LAK Document 33-2 Filed 10/31/18 Page 107 of 157 lapsed because it has never been enforced (which may simply be another form of the Fifth Amendment vagueness argument alluded to above). Indeed, there's been exactly one indictment in the history of the Logan Act — in 1803. And no convictions.

Finally, in this context, specifically, the statute requires the perpetrator to be acting "without authority of the United States." Of course it's true that, at the moment, General Flynn is a private citizen, and so he is, literally, exercising no formal government authority. But he's only in this position because, as of January 20, he *will* be exercising government authority. And it seems to me that the spirit of the Logan Act would not extend to preventing the President-Elect (and his subordinates) from taking steps to enable the exercise of the authority to conduct foreign affairs that they will soon formally possess — and that the electorate has already chosen to bestow upon them.

Of course, this is all academic; no one is seriously going to consider launching a Logan Act investigation of General Flynn (or anyone else involved in the transition), whether between now and next Friday, or, for sure, thereafter. But it's also, in my view, an unhelpful distraction: We should generally not be bothered by the idea that part of a presidential transition includes the President and his team setting the stage for the conduct of their foreign policy. Focusing on a process objection in this context, however academically and historically intriguing, only diverts attention from the far more serious and deserving *substantive* objections to the contours and purposes of and catalysts for that policy.

Image: Getty Images

EXHIBIT TT

The New York Times

Michael Flynn Pleads Guilty to Lying to the F.B.I. and Will Cooperate With Russia Inquiry

By Michael D. Shear and Adam Goldman

Dec. 1, 2017

WASHINGTON — President Trump's former national security adviser, Michael T. Flynn, pleaded guilty on Friday to lying to the F.B.I. about conversations with the Russian ambassador last December, becoming the first senior White House official to cut a cooperation deal in the special counsel's wide-ranging inquiry into election interference.

Mr. Flynn's discussions with Sergey I. Kislyak, the Russian ambassador, were part of a coordinated effort by Mr. Trump's aides to create foreign policy before they were in power, documents released as part of Mr. Flynn's plea agreement show. Their efforts undermined the existing policy of President Barack Obama and flouted a warning from a senior Obama administration official to stop meddling in foreign affairs before the inauguration.

The documents do not disclose what Mr. Trump knew about Mr. Flynn's discussions. But in at least one instance, prosecutors say, Mr. Flynn was directed by a "very senior member" of the presidential transition team to discuss a United Nations resolution. Mr. Trump's lawyers believe that unnamed aide was Mr. Trump's son-in-law and close adviser, Jared Kushner, according to a lawyer briefed on the matter.

The transition team was led by Vice President Mike Pence. Its top members included Mr. Kushner; Reince Priebus, Mr. Trump's first chief of staff; and K.T. McFarland, who was Mr. Flynn's deputy and was later appointed to be the ambassador to Singapore. Mr. Flynn spoke to Ms. McFarland about another of his conversations with Mr. Kislyak, according to the lawyer.

Mr. Flynn's decision to plead guilty to lying to investigators about those conversations marked a significant new phase in the investigation of the special counsel, Robert S. Mueller III, and a politically treacherous development for the president and his closest aides, whose activities in the West Wing are being scrutinized by F.B.I. agents, lawmakers, federal prosecutors and the media.

The admissions by Mr. Flynn have the potential to reshape the public's understanding of what the president's associates said and did in the days after Mr. Trump's unexpected election victory. And they suggest that prosecutors now have a cooperative source of information from inside the Oval Office during the administration's chaotic first weeks.

Mr. Flynn's plea deal could deeply undercut the claims made in January by Mr. Trump and his aides that they were misled by Mr. Flynn about his discussion with Russians regarding sanctions imposed on Moscow by the Obama administration over the election interference. In fact, the documents say multiple members of the team coordinated the specifics of Mr. Flynn's outreach to Russia and knew that the conversations were about sanctions.

Mr. Flynn's agreement also provided new context for Mr. Trump's efforts to get F.B.I. officials to back off their investigation of Mr. Flynn.

James B. Comey, the former F.B.I. director, has said that the president asked him to shut down the investigation one day after Mr. Flynn was fired in February. "I hope you can let this go," the president said, according to congressional testimony by Mr. Comey.

The information provided by Mr. Flynn, who promised to provide prosecutors with information on "any and all matters," suggests one possible motivation for the president's efforts to shut down the Flynn investigation: to avoid revealing the deep involvement of his top transition officials in Mr. Flynn's discussions with Mr. Kislyak.

In May, the president fired Mr. Comey as well and said the Russia investigation was on his mind at the time. Mr. Mueller is investigating whether Mr. Trump's firings of Mr. Comey or Mr. Flynn amount to obstruction of justice.

Mr. Trump made no public comments on Friday, though Mr. Flynn's plea provided an awkward backdrop for a closed-door holiday reception for members of the press corps at the White House.

Ty Cobb, the president's lawyer dealing with the Russia inquiry, played down the potential impact of Mr. Flynn's deal, saying that Mr. Flynn served only briefly in the administration and had pleaded guilty to just a single count of lying to the F.B.I.

"Nothing about the guilty plea or the charge implicates anyone other than Mr. Flynn," Mr. Cobb said in a statement.

But while the court documents released on Friday show no direct evidence of collusion with Russia, the special counsel's filings so far paint a damning portrait of Mr. Trump's associates. His former campaign chairman, two other campaign aides and his former national security adviser have now all been charged with felonies.

In a statement, Mr. Flynn, 58, denied "false accusations of 'treason," but said that he had agreed to cooperate with prosecutors, who are examining whether Mr. Trump's campaign colluded with Russians during the election and whether anyone sought to cover it up.

"I recognize that the actions I acknowledged in court today were wrong, and, through my faith in God, I am working to set things right," Mr. Flynn said. "My guilty plea and agreement to cooperate with the special counsel's office reflect a decision I made in the best interests of my family and of our country. I accept full responsibility for my actions."

Friday's 45-minute hearing in federal court in Washington was a humiliating moment for Mr. Flynn, a decorated Army general who had risen to lead the Defense Intelligence Agency but was fired by Mr. Obama before joining the Trump campaign.

Dressed in a crisp gray suit, Mr. Flynn arrived at the courtroom with his wife, holding hands. They occasionally traded glances, and her legs trembled before prosecutors laid out their case that Mr. Flynn had repeatedly lied to investigators about his dealings with Russia and his lobbying on behalf of the Turkish government.

Mr. Flynn's plea agreement requires his full cooperation. He agreed to take a polygraph and, if asked, to participate in covert law enforcement activities. Such undercover activities are unlikely, however, since the plea agreement was filed publicly.

Prosecutors said they would delay Mr. Flynn's sentencing, a sign that their investigation was not over and that they had not exhausted Mr. Flynn's cooperation. Lying to the F.B.I. carries a penalty of up to five years in prison, but court documents indicate Mr. Flynn faces a likely sentence of zero to six months in prison.

Because he pleaded guilty to lying, Mr. Flynn hurt his credibility as a witness if he ever offered evidence against someone else at trial. But Mr. Flynn's cooperation could still be valuable in guiding Mr. Mueller's understanding of the campaign's contacts with Russia, even if he cannot directly implicate anyone in a crime.

According to prosecutors, on Dec. 22, Mr. Flynn discussed with Mr. Kislyak an upcoming United Nations Security Council vote on whether to condemn Israel's building of settlements. At the time, the Obama administration was preparing to allow a Security Council vote on the matter.

Mr. Mueller's investigators have learned through witnesses and documents that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel asked the Trump transition team to lobby other countries to help Israel, according to two people briefed on the inquiry. Investigators have learned that Mr. Flynn and Mr. Kushner took the lead in those efforts.

Mr. Mueller's team has emails that show Mr. Flynn saying he would work to kill the vote, the people briefed on the matter said.

Mr. Flynn also spoke to Mr. Kislyak on Dec. 29, according to court documents, about the sanctions against Russia announced that day. He had consulted with Ms. McFarland about the matter. She was with other members of the team at Mr. Trump's Mar-a-Lago club in Florida, the court documents revealed, "to discuss what, if anything, to communicate to the Russian ambassador about the U.S. sanctions."

Mr. Flynn asked Mr. Kislyak that Moscow refrain from escalating the situation, and Mr. Kislyak said Russia "had chosen to moderate its response," the documents said. The following day, President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia said Moscow would not retaliate against the United States for the sanctions.

American intelligence agencies had grown so concerned about Mr. Flynn's communications with Mr. Kislyak and false accounts that he provided to Mr. Pence that he was interviewed by F.B.I. agents at the White House four days after the president was sworn into office. Sally Q. Yates, the acting attorney general, warned the White House that its national security adviser might be compromised by the Russians.

Even before Mr. Trump said he would appoint Mr. Flynn to the post, questions swirled around his connections to foreign governments, particularly a dinner he was paid to attend in Moscow in 2015 when he sat at the same table as Mr. Putin.

Mr. Flynn had also formed a consulting group after he left the Obama administration that led to inquiries into questionable lobbying for foreign governments, including the Turkish government.

Investigators working for the special counsel have questioned witnesses about whether Mr. Flynn was secretly paid by Turkish officials during the campaign. After he left the White House, Mr. Flynn disclosed that the Turkish government had paid him more than a half-million dollars to represent its interests in a dispute with the United States.

Prosecutors did not charge Mr. Flynn with crimes related to his work with the Turkish government. But in documents, they made clear that they have evidence that Mr. Flynn "made materially false statements and omissions" in his federal filings about that lobbying work.

Mr. Flynn's son, Michael Flynn Jr., was intimately involved with his father's undisclosed lobbying efforts. The son has not been charged with a crime and it is not clear whether his possible legal exposure put extra pressure on his father to plead guilty. Barry Coburn, a lawyer for Mr. Flynn Jr., declined to comment.

Correction: December 1, 2017

An earlier version of this article reported prematurely that Michael T. Flynn, the former national security adviser to President Trump, had pleaded guilty to lying to the F.B.I. He pleaded guilty on Friday morning but had not entered the plea when the article was first published.

Reporting was contributed by Michael S. Schmidt, Julie Hirschfeld Davis, Matt Apuzzo, Eileen Sullivan and Matthew Rosenberg.

A version of this article appears in print on Dec. 2, 2017, on Page A1 of the New York edition with the headline: Flynn Pleads Guilty; Will Aid Inquiry

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World

Guess Who Came to Dinner With Flynn and Putin

by Robert Windrem / April 18, 2017 / 9:39 AM EDT / Updated April 18, 2017 / 9:39 AM EDT



The head table of a gala celebrating the tenth anniversary of Russia Today in December of 2015 included Russian President Vladimir Putin and American retired Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn.Mikhail Klimentyev / Sputnik, Kremlin Pool Photo via AP, file

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It was a (red) star-studded affair, the December 2015 dinner celebrating the 10th birthday of Russian TV network RT. At a luxe Moscow hotel, President Vladimir Putin and a host of Russian luminaries toasted a state-backed news channel that U.S. intelligence calls a Kremlin mouthpiece.

And next to Putin at the head table, in the seat of honor, was an American. Retired Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, who would later become Donald Trump's national security adviser, was already advising Trump's presidential campaign when he was paid \$45,000 to speak at the gala.

"It is not coincidence that Flynn was placed next to President Putin," said Michael McFaul, U.S. ambassador in Moscow from 2012 to 2014 and now an NBC News analyst. "Flynn was considered a close Trump adviser. Why else would they want him there?"

Flynn's Moscow jaunt, like his oddly timed phone chats with the Russian ambassador, has been well reported. But who else came to dinner on Dec. 10, 2015? An NBC News review of video and photos from the RT gala shows a healthy serving of ex-spies, cronies and oligarchs, with a side of friendly journalists and another American.

Flynn was one of 10 people at the head table, including the Kremlin's top leadership. Three of the Russians, including Putin, were under U.S. sanctions at the time for their role in Russia's annexation of Crimea.



Sergey Ivanov (right), then Putin's chief of staff, sat directly across the table from Flynn at the gala. To his left, is Putin's nominal spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, who U.S. officials say is really the Russian president's de facto national security adviser.RT

Sergey Ivanov, then Putin's chief of staff, sat directly across the table from Flynn. A former KGB general who at one point ran KGB operations in Africa, he has also served as Russian defense minister and deputy prime minister. Ivanov had been under U.S. and European sanctions for a year and a half by the date of the dinner.

Next to Ivanov was Dmitry Peskov, nominally Putin's spokesman, but more importantly his de facto national security adviser, say U.S. officials. Like almost everyone at the head table that night, he speaks perfect English.

Flanking Putin on his right, two seats from Flynn, sat Alexey Gromov, Putin's deputy chief of staff. U.S. intelligence considers Gromov to be Putin's head propagandist. According to the January 6 Intelligence Community report on Russian interference in the U.S. election, "Gromov oversees political coverage on TV, and he has periodic meetings with media managers where he shares classified information and discusses their coverage plans."

He's also been accused by U.S. intelligence of "ordering media attacks on opposition figures." He has worked directly for the Russian president, first in the Press Office, then as press attache and, since 2008, as deputy chief of staff. He too was on U.S. and European sanctions the day of the dinner.



Margarita Simonyan is a personal friend of Putin, and worked in one of his presidential campaigns before being chosen to head RT. She took Putin's seat next to Flynn when Putin went to the stage to speak.RT

After Putin got up to make his speech, his place at Flynn's side was taken by Margarita Simonyan, RT's editor-in-chief. She is also editor-in-chief of Rossiya Segodnya, a state-owned and operated Russian news agency created by Putin. A personal friend of Putin, she worked in one of his presidential campaigns before being chosen by Gromov to head RT. The U.S. intelligence assessment of RT paints Simonyan as the lead person, along with Gromov, engaging in "information warfare" against U.S. policies. She is described as "closely tied to, controlled by the Kremlin."

In his dinner speech, Putin praised RT for its objectivity, disclaiming any influence on its coverage.

Next to Simonyan was the night's biggest global cultural celebrity, acclaimed director Emir Kusturica, who has twice won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival. Born a Muslim in Bosnia, he converted to Orthodox Christianity and is a Putin booster. Putin awarded him the Russian Order of Friendship in 2016. Of Putin, Kusturica once said, "If I was English, I would be very much against him. I was an American, I would even fight with him. But if I was Russian, I would vote for him."

Kusturica's wife, seated next to him, was the only spouse at the head table.

Also at the head table were three western politicians. Willy Wimmer, a former member of the German Bundestag who is often critical of U.S. foreign policy; Cyril Svoboda, former deputy prime minister, minister of foreign affairs, and interior minister of the Czech Republic, and two-time U.S. Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein, the only American besides Flynn at the head table.



Willy Wimmer, left, is a former member of the German Bundestag who is often critical of U.S. foreign policy. Two-time U.S. Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein was the only American besides Flynn at the head table.RT

Stein's 2016 campaign was heavily promoted by RT. She hasn't spoken much about the RT dinner, but in an interview with NBC News last fall, she deflected questions about her appearance, instead chastising the U.S. media for not paying attention to her campaign while RT gave it a lot more attention.

"And my own connection to RT, you know ironically, it takes a Russian television station to actually be open to independent candidates in this country and that is a shame. A shameful commentary on our own media," she told NBC's Alex Seitz-Wald.

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(Stein did well enough to help Russia achieve its aims. Her vote totals in the crucial states of Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Michigan were all greater than Clinton's margin of defeat, and arguably denied Clinton an Electoral College victory.)

Beyond the head table, Russia's oligarchs filled many of the seats.

Seated at a corner table was Mikhail Prokhorov, the owner of the Brooklyn Nets who ran against Putin as the designated liberal candidate in 2012 (and whose offices were raided by Russian security last April). Prokhorov is now on the outs with Putin. Next to him was Viktor Vekselberg, whose billions are in oil and aluminum and who is a business partner of Trump's Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and the owner of the world's largest collection of Faberge eggs.



Mikhail Prokhorov, owner of the Brooklyn Nets, ran against against Vladimir Putin as the designated liberal candidate in 2012. To the right of Prokhorov is fellow billionaire Viktor Vekselberg, an oil and aluminum magnate who is a business partner of Trump's Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross.RT

At the table behind Putin's was Mikhail Gorbachev, the last Communist Party ruler of the Soviet Union, along with Artur Chilingarov, polar explorer and federal senator. Nearby, there was Arkady Mamontov, a famous TV host who said that a massive meteor strike that injured nearly 1,500 people in 2013 was God's vengeance on Russia's gay rights movement.

There was Tina Kandelaki, a socialite and award-winning TV host who's appeared on the covers of the Russian versions of Playboy, InStyle, and Maxim — and ran an international marketing operation for the AK-47, calling it an instrument of peace.

Unable to attend in person was WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, who formerly hosted his own show on RT. Instead, he appeared via satellite as host of one of the 10th anniversary event's seminars, where he lamented the end of privacy.



Tina Kandelaki has appeared on the covers of the Russian versions of Playboy, InStyle, and Maxim and ran an international marketing operation for the AK-47, calling the gun an instrument of peace.RT

'A Great Learning Opportunity'

Flynn had already been a frequent guest on RT in the months prior to the dinner.

In an interview with Dana Priest of the Washington Post in August 2016, Flynn talked about why he accepted such a starring role. He said he didn't ask for it, that the Russians sat him next to Putin.

"I was one of the guests there. ... Some interesting characters. I found it a great learning opportunity. One of the things I learned was that Putin has no respect for the United States leadership. Not for the United States, but the leadership."

When Putin finished his speech that night, Flynn was among the first to leap to his feet and offer a standing ovation.

In the year following the dinner, RT was part of the Putin government's overt attempt to influence the U.S. election, according to the U.S. Intelligence Community. In the January 2017 report on Russian interference, the IC discussed the network's role at length.



Mikhail Gorbachev sat a table behind Putin's.RT

"RT's criticism of the U.S. election," said the report, "was the latest facet of its broader and longer-standing anti-U.S. messaging likely aimed at undermining viewers' trust in U.S. democratic procedures and undercutting U.S. criticism of Russia's political system. RT Editor-in-Chief Margarita Simonyan recently declared that the United States itself lacks democracy and that it has 'no moral right to teach the rest of the world."

Jill Stein declined an NBC News request for comment.

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EXHIBIT VV

The New Hork Times

Top Russian Official Tried to Broker 'Backdoor' Meeting Between Trump and Putin

By Matt Apuzzo, Matthew Rosenberg and Adam Goldman

Nov. 17, 2017

WASHINGTON — A senior Russian official who claimed to be acting at the behest of President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia tried in May 2016 to arrange a meeting between Mr. Putin and Donald J. Trump, according to several people familiar with the matter.

The news of this reached the Trump campaign in a very circuitous way. An advocate for Christian causes emailed campaign aides saying that Alexander Torshin, the deputy governor of the Russian central bank who has been linked both to Russia's security services and organized crime, had proposed a meeting between Mr. Putin and Mr. Trump. The subject line of the email, turned over to Senate investigators, read, "Russian backdoor overture and dinner invite," according to one person who has seen the message.

The proposal made its way to the senior levels of the Trump campaign before Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law and a top campaign aide, sent a message to top campaign officials rejecting it, according to two people who have seen Mr. Kushner's message.

Though the meeting never happened, Mr. Torshin's request is the latest example of how the Russian government intensified its effort to contact and influence the Trump campaign last year as Mr. Trump was closing in on the Republican presidential nomination. It came just weeks after a self-described intermediary for the Russian government told a Trump campaign aide, George Papadopoulos, that the Russians had "dirt" on Mr. Trump's rival, Hillary Clinton, in the form of "thousands of emails."

Soon after Mr. Torshin's outreach fizzled, Donald Trump Jr., the president's eldest son, arranged a meeting at Trump Tower after being told that a Russian lawyer with ties to the Kremlin would bring damaging information about Mrs. Clinton to the meeting.

These contacts were set against the backdrop of a sophisticated effort by Russia to hack Democratic computers, disseminate propaganda and undermine Mrs. Clinton's candidacy. The latest disclosure about Mr. Torshin, who is a leading figure in Mr. Putin's party, United Russia, shows the direct involvement of a high-ranking Russian official in the Kremlin's outreach to the campaign.

The overture to the Trump campaign was first reported by CNN. The New York Times confirmed new details, including Mr. Torshin's involvement and his claim to be acting on Mr. Putin's behalf. In a letter on Thursday, the Senate Judiciary Committee accused Mr. Kushner of

withholding the "backdoor overture" email, an accusation that Mr. Kushner's lawyers denied.

In a letter to the Senate Judiciary Committee on Friday, Abbe D. Lowell, a lawyer for Mr. Kushner, said that the Senate had asked for all documents related to Mr. Kushner's contacts with the Russians and that he had responded. "Again, this was not any contact, call or meeting in which Mr. Kushner was involved," Mr. Lowell said. "He is forwarded this long chain later on."

A special counsel for the Justice Department is investigating Russia's campaign to disrupt the 2016 election, and whether any of Donald J. Trump's associates aided in that effort. The president has repeatedly called the investigation a witch hunt, and as recently as last week, he said he accepted Mr. Putin's assurances that Russia did not try to meddle in the election.

Mr. Torshin's proposal is explained in a May 2016 email from Rick Clay, an advocate for conservative Christian causes, to Rick Dearborn, a Trump campaign aide. Mr. Clay was organizing a dinner in Louisville, Ky., honoring wounded veterans, and Mr. Trump was scheduled to be in the city for the National Rifle Association's annual convention. In the email to Mr. Dearborn, Mr. Clay said he hoped that Mr. Trump would attend the dinner, and he also included details about the overture from Mr. Torshin.

The email said that the dinner would be a chance for Mr. Trump to meet Mr. Torshin, who is a life member of the National Rifle Association in the United States and a vocal advocate for gun rights in Russia, according to three people who have seen the email.



Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law, last month. Mr. Kushner, a top campaign aide at the time, is said to have rejected the proposal. Doug Mills/The New York Times

The email said that the Russians believed they had "shared Christian values" with the Trump campaign.

Mr. Torshin has established ties to Russia's security establishment. He served in the upper house of the Russian Parliament and also sat on the country's National Anti-Terrorism Committee, a separate government council that includes the director of the Federal Security Service, known as F.S.B., and the ministers of defense, interior and foreign affairs.

Spanish investigators claim Mr. Torshin laundered money for the Russian mob through Spanish banks and properties while he was in Parliament. Mr. Torshin has denied the accusations.

Mr. Clay said in a telephone interview on Friday that while the request seemed "very thin," he did not think at the time that anyone in the Russian government was trying to interfere with the election. "That never ever, ever, ever entered my mind," he said. "You look back at it now, and it actually causes you some pause."

Mr. Clay said he no longer had the email and could not remember its specifics. He recalled that Mr. Torshin and a former assistant, Maria Butina, made the request through a longtime friend, Johnny Yenason, of the Military Warriors Support Foundation, a veterans' support organization. Mr. Yenason did not respond to messages seeking comment. Efforts to contact Mr. Torshin and Ms. Butina were unsuccessful.

Mr. Dearborn forwarded the email to top campaign aides, including Paul Manafort, Rick Gates and Mr. Kushner, according to two people who have seen the exchange. Mr. Kushner replied that Mr. Dearborn should decline, saying people often claimed to be acting as intermediaries for powerful figures just to gain access to the campaign.

"Pass on this," Mr. Kushner said, according to Mr. Lowell's letter to the Senate Judiciary Committee, adding: "Most likely these people then go back home and claim they have special access to gain importance for themselves. Be careful."

Mr. Clay said Mr. Dearborn sent him a response rejecting the idea.

"He told me it was inappropriate," Mr. Clay said. "I agreed with him."

Neither Mr. Trump nor his campaign officials attended the veterans' dinner, Mr. Clay said. Donald Trump Jr. attended a separate dinner that night, hosted by the National Rifle Association, that Mr. Torshin also attended. Both dinners were in Louisville.

Senate investigators obtained Mr. Clay's email as part of their inquiry into Russian election meddling. On Thursday, the top Republican and Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee said Mr. Kushner should have provided the email and other materials to the committee but did not. The Senate Intelligence Committee also did not receive the email from Mr. Kushner.

Mr. Torshin is ardently pro-Trump, and on numerous occasions since 2015 has posted Twitter messages about the president. In a post in February 2016, Mr. Torshin wrote: "Maria Butina is now in the USA. She writes to me that D. Trump (NRA member) really is for cooperation with

Russia."

A month later, he wrote, "Trump is a real man," and included a link to a video clip posted by BuzzFeed of Mr. Trump fist-bumping Marco Rubio during a Republican presidential debate.

Sharon LaFraniere and Scott Shane contributed reporting from Washington. Alain Delaquérière contributed research from New York.

Follow Matt Apuzzo on Twitter at @mattapuzzo, Matthew Rosenberg at @AllMattNYT and Adam Goldman at @adamgoldmanNYT.

A version of this article appears in print on Nov. 18, 2017, on Page A1 of the New York edition with the headline: Russians Sent 'Backdoor' Bid To Meet Trump

EXHIBIT WW

164,661 views | Mar 20, 2017, 07:45am

Exclusive: Powerful Russian Partner Boasts Of Ongoing Access To Trump Family



Noah Kirsch Forbes Staff
I mainly cover global wealth and entrepreneurs.

TWEET THIS



"Now that he ran and was elected, he does not forget his friends," Agalarov says.



Emin Agalarov (left), Donald Trump and Aras Agalarov at the Miss Universe competition in Moscow in 2013. The Agalarovs paid an estimated \$7 million in licensing fees to host the event. (Photo by Victor Boyko/Getty Images) "I have nothing to do with Russia," Donald Trump bellowed to thousands of frenzied supporters at a Tampa, Florida rally last October. The truth, it seems, is a bit more complicated.

In an exclusive interview with Forbes, Emin Agalarov—a Russian pop singer, real estate mogul and son of one of the country's richest people—described an ongoing relationship with the Trump family, including post-

election contact with the president himself.

Among Agalarov's most striking claims: that he and his billionaire developer father, Aras, had plans to build a Trump Tower in Russia that would now likely be under construction had Trump not run for office; that he has maintained contact with the Trump family since the election and has exchanged messages with Donald Trump Jr. as recently as January; and that President Trump himself sent a handwritten note to the Agalarovs in November after they congratulated him on his victory.

"Now that he ran and was elected, he does not forget his friends," Agalarov says.



The Agalarovs' ties to Trump stretch back roughly five years, when they expressed interest in bringing Trump's Miss Universe pageant to Moscow. After a visit to the Miss USA competition in Las Vegas, at Trump's invitation, they signed an agreement, eventually paying an estimated \$7 million in licensing fees to host Miss Universe at one of their properties.

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But the Agalarovs had their eyes set on a bigger target: a licensing partnership with the Trump Organization. "We thought that building a Trump Tower next to an Agalarov tower—having the two big names—could be a really cool project to execute," Emin Agalarov recalls. He says that he and his father selected a parcel of land and signed a letter of intent with their counterparts in New York, but before negotiations could further develop Trump launched his campaign and the deal was sidelined. "He ran for president, so we dropped the idea," Agalarov says. "But if he hadn't run we would probably be in the construction phase today."

On Monday morning, following this article's initial publication, a spokesperson for the Trump Organization replied to an earlier request for comment. "The Trump Organization does not [have], and has never had, any properties in Russia, and the press' fascination with this narrative is both misleading and fabricated," she said.

Forbes' own investigation corroborates the claim that the Trumps never closed a deal in Russia. Nonetheless, Agalarov's remarks seem to contrast the president's repeated insistence that he holds no ties there and come at a time of increased scrutiny for his administration on the subject. In late 2016, reports emerged that Kremlin-backed hackers may have sought to influence the U.S. election in Trump's favor. Then, in February, national security advisor Michael Flynn resigned for failing to disclose a conversation with Russian ambassador Sergey Kislyak two months prior.

Soon after, in March, Attorney General Jeff Sessions recused himself from any investigation into Russian electoral interference after admitting he had twice met with Kislyak in 2016; Sessions had previously told a Senate panel, under sworn

testimony, that he "did not have communications with the Russians." Other, similar controversies have dogged the Trump administration for months.

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(L-R): Donald Trump, Aras Agalarov, Miss Universe 2012 Olivia Culpo and Emin Agalarov at the 2013 Miss USA pageant in Las Vegas. (Photo by Ethan Miller/Getty Images)

The Trump Tower project, if completed, would have become the centerpiece in the Agalarovs' already expansive real estate portfolio. Their development firm, Crocus Group, holds dozens of high-value assets, including the luxurious Crocus City Mall in Moscow. Aras Agalarov founded the business in 1989 as a trade fair operator and has steadily expanded into other sectors. He is now personally worth an estimated \$1.7 billion, and he was awarded an Order of Honor of the Russian Federation in 2013 by President Vladimir Putin for his contributions to the state.

On paper, Aras, a buttoned-up real estate tycoon, is the more natural Trump partner. But it is his son—theatrical, handsome and a fluent English speaker—who quickly bonded with the New York reality TV star. In the years following the Miss Universe event, Emin performed for Trump at one of his golf courses,

invited him to make a cameo appearance in a bass-heavy music video and, Agalarov says, even spent time in Trump's New York office just prior to the announcement of his presidential campaign. The affection was clearly mutual. On his 35th birthday, in 2014, Trump sent Agalarov a personal video recording with this message: "You're a winner. You're a champ. You're great at real estate."

Two years later, when Trump won the general election, the Agalarovs passed along a letter of congratulations. The president-elect, Emin claims, responded with a handwritten note of gratitude. "He's a very caring person," Agalarov says. "He will give you extra attention if he likes you."



Click to view the full Billionaires page

Agalarov knows that maintaining that good favor will require continued contact with Trump's inner circle. To that end, he says he exchanged messages with Donald Jr. around the time of the inauguration, but was told no deals could be pursued until the company's leadership structure had further settled into place. Donald Trump Sr.'s new role and the ever-growing firestorm surrounding his ties to Russia are unlikely to help matters either.

But Agalarov is almost certainly used to additional political scrutiny. His ex-wife, with whom he split in 2015, is the daughter of Azerbaijan's president. As it happens, Trump once had a project there, too, though his company cancelled the transaction in December 2016 after development stalled. Agalarov says he played no role in arranging that deal four years prior, when Trump signed on.

No matter the current hiatus, should the Trumps ultimately seek to resume their dealings with the Agalarov clan, they will find a partner eager to collaborate. "Anything Trump related I would be interested to pursue," Agalarov says. "I think today the Trump brand is stronger all over the world. And him being the president; I mean, it's a big brand now."

For more on Donald Trump's ties to Russia, as covered in the March issue of Forbes, click here.

I'm currently a reporter on the wealth team at Forbes. Before that, I spent a year on the road—driving for Uber in Cleveland, volcano climbing in Guatemala, cattle farming in Uruguay, and lots of stuff in between. I graduated from Tufts University with a dual degree in inter... MORE Follow Noah on Twitter @Noah_Kirsch.

Have information Forbes should know? Reach us confidentially at tips@forbes.com or via our SecureDrop.

EXHIBIT XX

The Washington Post

National

A guide to the five major investigations of the Trump campaign's possible ties to Russia

By Kevin Uhrmacher and Kim Soffen

Updated June 17, 2017

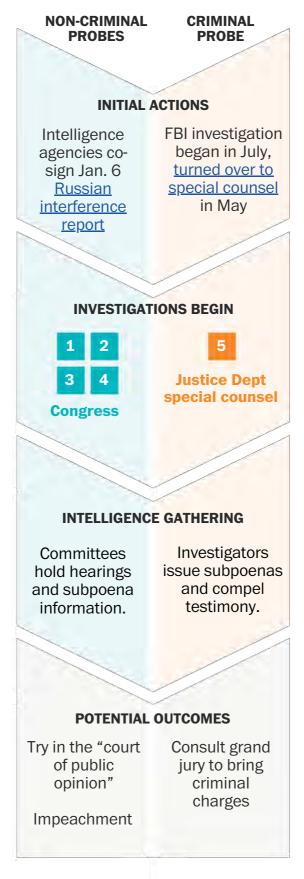


This page has been updated to reflect the selection of Rep. Trey Gowdy (R-S.C.) as chairman of the House Oversight panel.

Case 1:17-cv-08153-LAK. Document 33-2 Filed 10/31/18 Page 135 of 157 All eyes are on Robert S. Mueller III as he begins his role as special counsel, leading the Justice Department's probe into the Trump campaign's possible ties to Russia. But that's far from the only investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 election.

The criminal investigation led by the special counsel is charged with determining if anything illegal occurred. Meanwhile, each of the four major congressional fact-finding investigations is working to expose transgressions it finds unethical.

Despite their differing goals, all the investigations are moving simultaneously and using much of the same information.



The investigations are looking into different things

Generally, the special counsel and intelligence committees have a broader scope than the other committees.

Case 1:17-cv-08153-LAK Document 33-2 Filed 10/31/18 Page 137 of 157 The scope of the special counsel's inquiry has broadened to include any effort by Trump to obstruct justice. Former FBI Director James Comey said in his Senate testimony that he believes he was fired over the FBI's investigation into possible coordination between the Trump campaign and the Russians.



Any attempt to obstruct justice by Trump, or his allies

The Trump campaign's ties to Russia

Russian meddling in the 2016 election

Possible financial crimes by Trump associates

Senate Intelligence

Russia's interference in the election

Collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia

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Leaks to the media

House Intelligence

Russia's interference in the election

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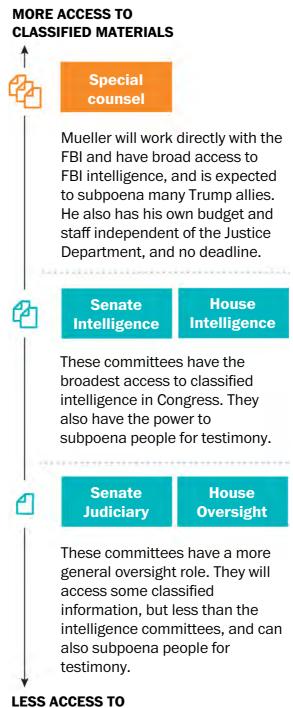
House Oversight

Flynn's contacts with Russian officials, including payments he received.

Some have more access to information than others 139 of 157

Access differs both because of how aggressively the leaders pursue the investigation — the special counsel is expected to be more thorough — and the jurisdiction of the committees. They all are also expected to get unclassified information by requesting or subpoening testimony and documents from Trump affiliates and others involved.

Mueller plans to interview top intelligence officials as early as <u>this week</u>. It may not be possible for the White House to prevent those officials from speaking to Mueller's investigators because the Supreme Court ruled during the Watergate scandal that administration officials cannot withhold evidence in criminal prosecutions.



[Everything you need to know about the Russia investigation's 'special counsel']

The investigations can interfere with one another

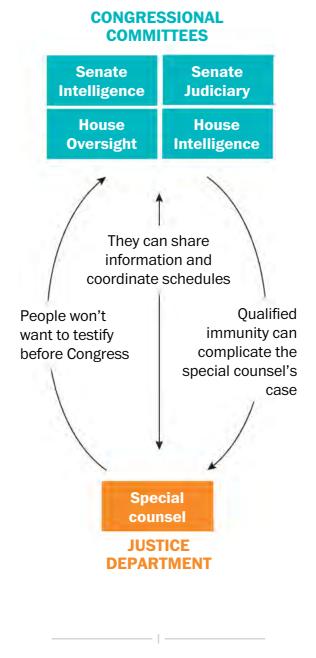
CLASSIFIED MATERIALS

Each probe will share information to some extent. The leaders of the Senate Intelligence Committee released a statement saying they "will engage with Case 1:17-cv-08153-LAK Document 33-2 Filed 10/31/18 Page 141 of 157 Director Mueller and our expectation is that he will engage with the Committee as well."

But the investigations can also stymie one another. Congress has the power to grant "qualified immunity" to people who testify, meaning their statements cannot be used against them in court. Since it is hard for prosecutors to show the evidence they are using is independent of those statements, it can make their case significantly harder to prove.

[Appointment of Mueller could complicate other probes into alleged Russian meddling]

On the other hand, some people may refuse to testify before congressional committees because they are under criminal investigation by the special counsel. Former national security adviser Michael Flynn has already refused to turn over documents to the Senate Intelligence Committee, invoking his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination.



They can deliver different consequences

Because the congressional investigations are political and the special counsel's is legal, they have different standards for what qualifies as wrongdoing, and different ways to punish wrongdoers.

The Justice Department has long taken the position that <u>it would not be</u> <u>appropriate to charge a sitting president</u>. Instead, the responsibility would fall on Congress to review any findings of criminal misconduct and then decide whether to initiate impeachment proceedings.



This is the legal arm of the investigation, so members are focused on violations of federal law rather than immoral actions more broadly. They could file charges against the subjects of their investigation. Deputy Attorney General Rod J. Rosenstein, a Trump appointee, could publish reports of their findings, which would have political consequences.



They can publicize their findings, which could ultimately lead to public apologies, resignations or lost elections. And the wrongdoings they punish do not necessarily need to be illegal, just politically unpalatable.



They can deliver similar political consequences to the Senate. They also are able to initiate the impeachment process, though this probably would largely occur within the Rules and Judiciary committees.

Their conclusions will probably have different levels of 157 credibility

Because Republicans control both houses of Congress, Democrats are less inclined to view their committees' conclusions as credible than the special counsel's. And depending on how the special counsel investigation plays out — Trump-appointed Justice Department officials still have <u>some</u> control over the investigation — it may lose some credibility as well.

And not all congressional investigations are on equal footing in this respect — some have made a real effort for the investigation to be bipartisan, while others have appeared too cozy with Trump administration leaders and have had to recuse themselves.

Special counsel

TRUMP APPOINTEE



Rosenstein Mueller

Mueller still reports to Trump-appointed Rosenstein since Attorney General Jeff Sessions recused himself, and could be fired by Trump — though it would be no small task. Also, Mueller previously worked at the law firm WilmerHale, which had Jared Kushner and former Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort as clients. Democrats view these as conflicts of interest, though Justice Department ethics experts have cleared the latter.



Burr Warner

Sen. Richard Burr (R-N.C.) and Sen. Mark R. Warner (D-Va.) are jointly working on this notoriously bipartisan investigation. Many Democrats view it as the most credible of the congressional investigations.

Senate Judiciary

GOP



<u>publicly</u> cast doubt on the FBI investigation's objectivity because of acting director Andrew McCabe's wife's close ties to the Clintons and how former director James B. Comey handled the Clinton email investigation.



Rep. K. Michael Conaway (R-Tex.) and Rep. Adam B. Schiff (D-Calif.) are working together after committee chair Rep. Devin Nunes (R-Calif.) was pressured to recuse himself. Nunes allegedly publicly shared classified intelligence and gave Trump details about the investigation.



Rep. Trey Gowdy (R-S.C.) has taken control of the investigation, but it remains unclear if he'll use it to investigate the president. Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah) was running the investigation as the chair of the committee, but stepped down and will leave Congress at the end of June.

Even with all these investigations — plus other related inquiries in the Treasury Department and other congressional committees — it could be years before they come to a close. And if charges are not filed, we may

Case 1:17-cv-08153-LAK Document 33-2 Filed 10/31/18 Page 147 of 157 never know what happened, or did not happen, between the Trump campaign and the Russian government.

About this story

Information from staff reports and Eric Schickler, political science professor at the University of California at Berkeley. Additional special counsel details from Congressional Research Service [PDF] and the Justice Department.

Originally published May 30, 2017.

More stories

Here's how an independent investigation into Trump and Russia would happen

All over Washington, politicians are calling for independent investigations into Russian interference in the election. But not everyone is calling for the same thing. Here's a quick guide to what people generally mean when they call for different kinds of "independent investigations."

Here's what we know so far about Team Trump's ties to Russian interests

Here are members of Team Trump who are known to have Russian connections and the story lines that have made those ties relevant.

A running tally of Trump's talls claims 10/31/18 Page 148 of 157

The Fact Checker's ongoing database of President Trump's false and misleading claims since January 20th

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Pause live updates II

Patriot44

8/4/2017 11:56 AM EDT

This is obviously a left wing site, but let's try to make some sense anyway. "A running tally of Trump's false claims". How about you keep score on false claims like "if you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor; if you like your plan you can keep your plan; Obamacare will save people \$2500 a year.

Patriot44

8/4/2017 11:54 AM EDT

The left is so awash with socialists, communists and secularists! The Democrats and the media have been infiltrated by such people that they have no message or a meaningful platform that we the people will buy that they are focusing on war with Trump instead of war with North Korea, or Iran or helping to run the country. They have nothing to offer but radical social engineering, infanticide on demand, eradication of Christianity, support of a group of idiots whose only commonality is that they engage in a disgusting form or sexual expression, an illegal supreme court decision that gave people with a mental disorder the "right" to marry, although it is not supported by the constitution or it's 14th amendment and they wonder why they keep losing elections (the House, the Senate, the White House, gubernatorial races, state legislatures). The country is waking up and can see the emperor (i.e., the Democrats) has no clothes on.

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DCveteran

8/27/2017 6:11 PM EDT

Trump supports the Nationalist Socialist Party and they support him!

Most Read

EXHIBIT YY

With Russia investigation, plenty to see here

The Editorial Board, USA TODAY Published 7:08 p.m. ET Sept. 18, 2017 | Updated 4:44 p.m. ET Sept. 19, 2017

Fireworks keep popping up, and smoke is wafting over the Trump White House: Our view



(Photo: Mark Makela, Getty Images)

President Trump and his acolytes keep telling Americans to pay no heed to allegations that the Trump campaign colluded with Russia to interfere in last year's election.

Former chief strategist Steve Bannon told 60 Minutes (https://www.cbsnews.com/news/60-minutes-breitbartsteve-bannon-declares-war-on-the-gop/) the investigation is a "waste of time" and a "farce." Trump's tweets have variously described the Russia investigation as fake news, fabricated or a "total scam (https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/7/11/15953640/donald-trump-twitter-mocked-russia-collusion)."

It's all reminiscent of the old Naked Gun comedy, where police detective Frank Drebin stands in front of an exploding house full of fireworks and tells a gaggle of observers: "Nothing to see here, please disperse."

ROGER STONE: Russian collusion? It's a delusion (/story/opinion/2017/09/18/russian-collusion-delusionroger-stone-editorials-debates/105769194/)

Actually, the longer special prosecutor Robert Mueller, Congress and the news media look at this scandal, the more Roman candles light up the sky. Even as Russia news has been eclipsed in recent weeks by hurricanes and North Korean missile tests, explosive new evidence continues to emerge:

- · At the same time Trump was running for the Republican presidential nomination, his business organization was secretly pursuing a multimillion dollar real estate deal in Russia, an adversarial nation. "Our boy can become president of the USA and we can engineer it," Russian-born business associate Felix Sater gushed in an email to a Trump lawyer (https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/28/us/politics/trumptower-putin-felix-sater.html?mcubz=1) over the Trump Tower Moscow project he was promoting. "I will get all of (Putin's) team to buy in on this." The project never got off the ground, but not for a lack of trying by Team Trump.
- Russia's attack on American democracy went beyond the hacking (https://www.dhs.gov/news/2016/10/07/joint-statement-departmenthomeland-security-and-office-director-national) and leaking of Democratic campaign emails, which were discussed several times (http://wiod.iheart.com/media/play/27269924/) last summer by longtime Trump adviser Roger Stone $(\underline{https://soundcloud.com/breitbart/breitbart-news-daily-roger-stone-august-26-2016}), who denies collusion. The meddling also included efforts$ to compromise the computer election-related systems of 21 states (https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/homelandsecurity-official-russian-government-actors-potentially-tried-to-hack-election-systems-in-21-states/2017/06/21/33bf31d4-5686-11e7-ba90f5875b7d1876 story.html?utm_term=.fcbe4bd8838d); the spreading of fake, divisive news (https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/ICA 2017 01.pdf) by Kremlin-run or Kremlin-financed media outlets; and the purchase of \$100,000 in ads on Facebook (/story/tech/news/2017/09/18/facebook-delivers-russian-ad-data-special-counsel-robert-mueller/676769001/). All were aimed at favoring Trump, harming Hillary Clinton or generally creating divisions within the electorate.
- · Countless meetings took place between Russian proxies and Trump campaign officials, who conveniently forgot or failed to mention the meetings until presented with proof they took place. Among the most curious was the get-together on June 9, 2016, among Donald Trump Jr., then-Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort, son-in-law Jared Kushner and a Russian lawyer (/story/news/politics/2017/07/11/timelinedonald-trump-ir-interactions-kremlin-linked-lawyer/467634001/) to hear about potential dirt on Hillary Clinton. "I love it," Donald Jr. enthused in an email anticipating the meeting. He later said nothing came of it, but it sure smells like attempted collusion.
- The saga of former national security adviser Michael Flynn grows ever more tawdry, with reports that Flynn served as a consultant on Middle East nuclear power plants (http://www.newsweek.com/2017/06/23/flynn-russia-nuclear-energy-middle-east-iran-saudi-arabia-gatar-israeldonald-623396.html) involving Russian companies. Flynn remains a central figure in the Russia investigation. His misrepresentations about repeated contacts with the Russian ambassador before becoming NSC adviser led to his resignation. Trump asked FBI Director James Comey to back off on investigating Flynn and then fired Comey, a move that led to the appointment of Mueller as special prosecutor and the

Case 1:17-cv-08153-LAKwippoliment 33-2 Triffile on 10/31/18 Page 152 of 157 humiliation of Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who, according to a report in The New York Times, was called an "idiot

(https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/14/us/politics/jeff-sessions-trump.html?mcubz=0)" by Trump for giving up oversight of the Russian probe.

Mueller's potential targets of opportunity — as he convenes a grand jury, issues subpoenas and conducts raids — are multiplying by the week. There's the broader Russian election-interference campaign. Then there's Flynn and now his son, Michael G. Flynn, as well as Manafort, Donald Jr., Trump's family finances and more.

This fireworks show continues to get bigger, and smoke from it is wafting over the Trump White House.

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EXHIBIT ZZ

The New York Times

Mueller Seeks White House Documents Related to Trump's Actions as President

By Michael S. Schmidt

Sept. 20, 2017

WASHINGTON — Robert S. Mueller III, the special counsel, has asked the White House for documents about some of President Trump's most scrutinized actions since taking office, including the firing of his national security adviser and F.B.I. director, according to White House officials.

Mr. Mueller is also interested in an Oval Office meeting Mr. Trump had with Russian officials in which he said the dismissal of the F.B.I. director had relieved "great pressure" on him.

The document requests provide the most details to date about the breadth of Mr. Mueller's investigation, and show that several aspects of his inquiry are focused squarely on Mr. Trump's behavior in the White House.

In recent weeks, Mr. Mueller's office sent a document to the White House that detailed 13 areas in which investigators are seeking information. Since then, administration lawyers have been scouring White House emails and asking officials whether they have other documents or notes that may pertain to Mr. Mueller's requests.

One of the requests is about a meeting Mr. Trump had in May with Russian officials in the Oval Office the day after James B. Comey, the F.B.I. director, was fired. That day, Mr. Trump met with the Russian foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov, and the Russian ambassador to the United States at the time, Sergey I. Kislyak, along with other Russian officials. The New York Times reported that in the meeting Mr. Trump had said that firing Mr. Comey relieved "great pressure" on him.



Russia's official news agency photographed President Trump's meeting with Sergey V. Lavrov, the Russian foreign minister, in the Oval Office in May. The American news media was denied access. Alexander Shcherbak/TASS, via Getty Images

Mr. Mueller has also requested documents about the circumstances of the firing of Michael T. Flynn, who was Mr. Trump's first national security adviser. Additionally, the special counsel has asked for documents about how the White House responded to questions from The Times about a June 2016 meeting at Trump Tower. That meeting was set up by Donald Trump Jr., the president's eldest son, to get derogatory information from Russians about Hillary Clinton.

In July, when The Times put questions about the meeting to the White House, Mr. Trump and senior administration officials prepared a response on Air Force One that made no mention of the meeting's real purpose, saying instead that it focused on Russian adoptions. Mr. Mueller has asked for all documents the White House has about the meeting, and all internal White House communications about the statement drafted on Air Force One.

Ty Cobb, the lawyer Mr. Trump hired to provide materials related to the Russia investigation to the special counsel and Congress, has told Mr. Mueller's office that he will turn over many of the documents this week.

"We can't comment on any specific requests being made or our conversations with the special counsel," he said.

Based on the document request to the White House, there is no indication that Mr. Mueller is pressing to examine Mr. Trump's personal finances or business dealings — areas the president has said should be off limits. It is not clear whether Mr. Mueller has made separate document requests elsewhere to examine those subjects.

Mr. Mueller has asked for all internal White House communications about numerous former campaign officials, including Paul J. Manafort, the former campaign chairman who is now under federal investigation. The document request also seeks communications about Mr. Trump's campaign foreign policy team: Carter Page, J. D. Gordon, Keith Kellogg, George Papadopoulos, Walid Phares and Joseph E. Schmitz.

Of the 13 subjects in Mr. Mueller's document request, four are related to Mr. Flynn. The retired lieutenant general was fired in February after it was revealed that he misled Vice President Mike Pence about December phone calls he had with Mr. Kislyak, the Russian ambassador at the time.

American officials said Mr. Flynn had told the vice president that he had only exchanged holiday greetings with Mr. Kislyak, when in fact the two men had discussed economic sanctions against Russia. The phone calls took place in late December, around the same time the Obama administration was announcing sanctions to punish Russia for what American officials said was a Russian campaign to disrupt the November presidential election.

F.B.I. agents interviewed Mr. Flynn about the phone calls, and the special counsel has requested all internal White House communications about the F.B.I. interview. Mr. Mueller has also asked for documents about how the White House responded to concerns raised by the Justice Department that Mr. Flynn might be subject to Russian blackmail for misleading Mr. Pence about the calls.

Three of Mr. Mueller's requests focus on Mr. Comey's firing. The special counsel wants any White House documents about the decision-making that led to Mr. Comey's firing, and about all meetings Mr. Comey had with Mr. Trump.

Mr. Mueller was appointed in May, shortly after it was revealed that Mr. Comey had written a series of memos about his interactions with Mr. Trump — including one Oval Office meeting when Mr. Comey said Mr. Trump had asked him to end the F.B.I. investigation of Mr. Flynn. During another meeting, the president asked for a pledge of loyalty from the F.B.I. director, according to Mr. Comey's public testimony.

The special counsel has requested documents about a statement made a week before Mr. Comey's firing by the former White House press secretary, Sean Spicer.

During a May 3 news briefing, Mr. Spicer said that "the president has confidence in the director."

The previous night, Mr. Trump had tweeted that Mr. Comey "was the best thing that ever happened to Hillary Clinton in that he gave her a free pass for many bad deeds!"

Matt Apuzzo contributed reporting from Washington, and Maggie Haberman from New York.

A version of this article appears in print on Sept. 21, 2017, on Page A1 of the New York edition with the headline: Mueller Inquiry Seeks Documents On Trump Firings

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